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LORD GAURANATH

OR

SALVATION FOR ALL

BY

SHISHIR KUMAR GHOSE.

VOL. I.

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P R E F A C E.

Now that steam, electricity, and the printing press have brought into closer communication the different races that inhabit the earth, and have expanded the minds of men, tending to dispel the illusion that God Almighty specially favours any particular people, it is time to proclaim to the world, that if a messenger from God appeared in Judea about nineteen hundred years ago, it is no less true that a messenger from the same God appeared in the quiet town of Navadweep (popularly known as Nadia) in Bengal some fifteen centuries later. The former is known by the name of Jesus Christ; the latter is known in India by the name of Sree Gauranga, Sree Krishna Chaitanya and several other names. If wonders attended Jesus, so also they attended Sree Gauranga of Nadia.

The Christians have conferred an inestimable obligation upon those Hindus whose faith has been affected by Western materialism, by presenting Christ to them; and they, as a grateful return, are anxious to present Sree Krishna and Sree Gauranga to the people of the West.

If it is a fact that a Messiah was born in Judea nineteen hundred years ago, it seems not unreasonable to suppose that, in other places, other Messiahs might appear at different periods of the history of the world, and in different localities. Thus, the advent of Jesus Christ establishes the possibility of the divine character of Sree Gauranga, and, in the same way, the advent of

Sree Gauranga establishes the possibility of the advent of Jesus Christ. The writer of this book had long entertained a notion that Jesus Christ was a mythical character. But when, by study, he came to believe in the reality of the heavenly mission of Sree Gauranga, he was led to admit the truth of that of Jesus Christ also. Others may be benefited in the same way.

According to the teachings of the Hindu philosophy, the advent of an avatar, (i. e. the incarnation of God upon earth) is a law of nature. In the sacred Book entitled the Bhagvat Geeta, we find a Sloka, in which Sree Krishna (God Almighty) declares : Wherever there is need of establishing the superiority of righteousness over sin I become an avatar, which means, I come down to earth to vindicate the superiority of righteousness over sin.

It is impossible to deny the principle inculcated in the above. If God sends a messenger to one place, it is natural to expect that He sends others to other places. Man is a progressive being, and he needs subtler spiritual food as he grows spiritually. What sufficed for the Jews in the days of Abraham, did not meet their requirements at the time of Jesus. Is it, then, a sacrilege to suppose, that if God Almighty sends messengers at all, He would send them at different periods of the world's history and human progress ?

Then again, belief in reports of supernatural incidents is not arrived at by natural means. For instance, who could, by means of his unaided reason alone, have believed the report that diseases were cured by blowing upon with the mouth, and by the passing of hands over the affected parts ? In India, this has been one of the ways by which diseases are sought to be cured. When for the first time we witnessed the process, we believed it to be merely the outcome of superstition. When, however, we came to know that in France Mesmer resorted to the very same seemingly strange process, for the healing of diseases, we were forced, not only to admit that there was some truth underlying Mesmerism, but also

that similar practices, obtaining here, were likewise founded upon some natural law.

Unlikely incidents, from their very nature, do not commend themselves to our belief in the beginning ; but if similar things happen at other places and other periods, the very improbability of the occurrences tends to prove their reality. I'll an intelligent man, who has never heard either of Jesus or Gauranga, that Jesus, as generally believed in the West, was a messenger of God, and he will laugh at you. But tell him that, as alleged in the East, precisely similar incidents to those reported of Christ, were repeated in Nadia fifteen centuries later, and that, like Jesus, Sree Gauranga was, for his superhuman powers, believed to be a messenger from God, then he, if honest-minded, will have to admit, that such strange things, happening in two such widely-separated places and at two different periods, are proofs tending to establish the divine nature of the messengers and their teachings. The contention, that, if Jesus and Gauranga had been fictions, they would have been differently conceived, has also a good deal of force in it.

Prophets, if really such, must never preach contradictory doctrines ; for, there is but one God, and His laws are immutable. And, as a matter of fact, we see Jesus, Mahomed, and Sree Gauranga, agreeing in the essentials and proclaiming the same doctrines, viz., the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the existence of a future state, and the high destiny of mankind. That the Prophets, appearing at different places and periods, have nevertheless agreed in essentials, is a proof that they are not fictions.

Foolish people quarrel over the Prophets of their respective faiths, each praising his own and belittling all others. But the unprejudiced man, who is also a seeker after the truth, will at once perceive that the Prophets, over whom their respective followers quarrel, prove only the genuineness of one another. If Jesus Christ is a Prophet, we are bound to regard Mahomed and Sree

Gauranga in the same light. If Sree Gauranga is a Prophet, we are bound to accept the reality of the mission of Jesus and Mahomed.

The denial of any widely-accepted Messiah would lead to the denial of almost every religion in the world ; for, most religious faiths are founded upon messages from above. There is a ceaseless quarrel over Messiahs, between Buddhists, Christians, and Mussulmans. If the followers of Christ claim the right of denying the reality of other Prophets, they thereby entitle the followers of the other Prophets to claim the same right of denying the genuineness of theirs. And what will be the result ? Buddhists and Mahomedans will reject Christ and only Christians uphold him ; Mahomedans will support their Prophet, while both Christians and Buddhists repudiate him ; and the same treatment will be meted out to Buddha by the followers of every other Prophet. In this manner the genuineness of every Prophet would be disproved. The Hindus accept all, and this is in accordance with the impartiality and Fatherhood attributed to the Creator.

The last of the Prophets, Sree Gauranga, has many advantages over those who preceded him. The accounts given of the life of Jesus are comparatively meagre ; the same may be said of that of Mahomed. But the sayings and doings of Sree Gauranga have been preserved for us, even to the minutest detail, by eye-witnesses, and by his immediate followers,—themselves learned and holy men of the highest character. His advent was immediately followed by the appearance of thousands of books bearing on his life and works, and the creation of thousands of saints, saintly families, and sacred places. All the data, necessary for the purpose of conclusively proving an historical fact, do exist to prove the reality of the wonderful deeds of Sree Gauranga.

Many of the localities, where the other Prophets carried on their labours, can hardly be traced now. But traces of the wanderings of Sree Gauranga are to be seen in thousands of places

throughout this country, from Agra to Cape Comorin. The place where he had chanced to pass a night became holy, as did the spot where he once had sat ; rivers changed their names because he had bathed therein ; villages were called after him because he had passed through them.

As will appear from a perusal of this book, when Sree Gauranga flourished, the Brahmins of Nadia had carried the culture of the intellect to such a pitch as had never been achieved before, either in ancient or modern times. Sree Gauranga had thus to address men of the highest intelligence and the profoundest learning, and it is therefore but natural that his teachings should be deeper and more comprehensive than those revealed to the Jews by Jesus Christ, or to the Mussulmans by Mahomed.

Prophets who have been worshipped by millions throughout successive ages, cannot be considered as men who would be likely to deceive their followers by false pretensions. Since, therefore, Jesus said that he was the son of God, we are bound to accept him as such ; and since Mahomed announced himself as the *dost* or friend of God, we are similarly bound to take him at his word.

Sree Gauranga lived as the meekest and humblest of devotees ; but the hundreds of thousands who followed him, among whom were men of the highest position, regarded him as an Avatar of Almighty Himself, who had come upon earth to show His people what sort of Being He was and how it was possible for a human creature to associate with Him.

Why he was regarded by the highest men in the land as an Avatar of God Almighty Himself, will be explained in detail in this book. I may, however, mention here that his character, his presence, and his mental powers were such as to compel men of the highest intellect to worship him as a divine Being. He was so perfect a Being, physically, mentally, and spiritually, that the excellence, that was seen in him, was considered to be above

the reach of humanity. It was thought that if it ever pleased God Almighty to appear among mankind in the character of a human being, He could not present Himself in a more delectable or excellent form than that of Sree Gauranga. His powers were more than human ; his presence, look, or touch converted the cruelest of men and the most hardened of sinners into saints. Kings, princes, ministers, warriors, and savants deserted society and became ascetics at his bidding. His teachings revealed to the gaze of man a wonderful and beautiful world, the existence of which had never before been suspected by them.

As previously stated, millions (many of whom belonged to the highest ranks of society in India) worshipped Sree Gauranga as God Almighty Himself. But whether he was in truth God Almighty Himself, or only a messenger from Him, is not the point at issue. If it can be established that he brought a message from God, this fact in itself will have conferred an inestimable blessing upon mankind. The important point to be established is that the message, which he proclaimed as coming from God, is not a fiction but a reality. That point cannot be established quite conclusively of Christ from the accounts given of him, partly because these are meagre, and partly for other reasons. But it can be done conclusively in regard to Sree Gauranga from facts in his life.

Thus the life of Sree Gauranga is valuable to all mankind. It contains incidents to establish the fact that God Almighty does send messages of love to mankind. If this point is once established, the destiny of man becomes happy indeed. For, the reality of a message of love from God means the acquisition of all that is required by man to render him happy. It means that God is kind and affectionate, and that man is immortal and his destiny great. If man be assured of an everlasting happy future, the transient miseries of this world will no longer disconcert or vex him.

Reader ! Let us not quarrel over our respective Prophets, and needlessly bring discord in, where there ought to be only harmony.

We are all children of the same Father, Who has wealth and love enough to provide for all, according to their requirements. A professed Christian is not a true Christian, if he has no faith. We have no desire to wrest a Christian from the bosom of Christ in order to transfer him to that of Sree Gauranga. Our object is to preserve the kingdom of Christ and not to destroy it. A study of the life of the Nadia Avatar will only confirm the faith of an unbelieving Christian in Christ, and of a sceptic in the reality of a beneficent God and of a future life. This much, however, we claim for the Avatar of Nadia that he had to address himself to a more advanced audience than the Prophet of Judea had to do.

The ways of God are mysterious. The only wealth that a man has is his religion. Religion ! what untold treasure lies hidden in that oft-repeated and misunderstood word ! Lands, gold, position, and the like are only transient and delusive blessings to mankind. Sree Gauranga appeared in India, and his doings and sayings have been hitherto kept hidden from the rest of mankind. Is it possible that his great work in India should for ever remain a sealed book to other nations ? Can the work of God prove abortive ? Who knows but that India was conquered so that this Nadia Prophet's message might be proclaimed to the world ? For, what can be a greater blessing to mankind than the assurance that God does send messages of love to humanity ?

Nadia's message is particularly addressed to those who have no faith in religion, God, and an after-world. These may, by a perusal of the life of Sree Gauranga, come to realize that, not only is there a God, but that He loves man more than a father loves his child or a wife loves her husband, and that He destined man for high purposes,—to make him His everlasting and dear companion in His eternal home of peace and ever-increasing joy.

If the gifted races of the West have devoted all their energies

to the solution of the mysteries which surround the material universe, the Hindus have devoted themselves from time immemorial to the solution of the mysteries which appertain to the spiritual nature of man. The highest intellectual efforts of the Hindus in this direction culminated in Vedantism, Buddhism, and other similar cults or systems of philosophy,—all of which ended disastrously, chiefly for the reason that they were supposed, unjustly we think, to teach the extinction of the soul after death. The principles of these systems are not unknown to the people of the West. But the emotional side of human nature, as it has been examined by the Hindus, and analysed, developed, and utilized for purposes of salvation, is perhaps altogether unknown to them. It was Sree Gauranga who first went, as it were, to the very bottom of the subject, and taught his followers to regard with abhorrence and loathing the doctrine which makes the extinction of the soul,—or, what is practically the extinction of the soul—the goal of life. As we have already said, his doctrine reveals not only a new but a fascinating world to humanity.

The writer of this book deeply regrets that his imperfect knowledge of the English language, and the untranslatable nature of many of the ideas with which he has had to deal, have made it impossible for him to do full justice to the subject which he has taken in hand. He craves the reader's indulgence for the manifold defects due to these causes, which the perusal of his pages will disclose to him.

May His blessings be showered upon mankind ! May we realise that we are all brethren, sons of the same Father, and that we are destined to live in peace and harmony with one another, and forbear from quarrelling over transient and therefore worthless possessions ! May we realise that the object of human life is the attainment of God !

INTRODUCTION.

NADIA,—THE CITY OF LEARNED MEN.

ABOUT the time when Sree Gauranga appeared, Bengal had nearly lost its independence. The ruler was a Mahomedan ; and though the Hindus succeeded, from time to time, in occupying the throne, they were obliged to embrace Mahomedanism in order to retain their sovereignty. The Hindu King, Subuddhi Rai, was dethroned by his General, Hossein Khan, who ascended the throne of Bengal under the title of Hossein Shah in A. D. 1498.

Gour (now in ruins), near Rajmehal, was the then capital of Bengal. The Mussalman sovereigns nominally administered the affairs of the country through Kazis or Governors. The chief business of these officials was to administer justice, to collect the revenue from the Hindu Rajas under them, and to remit a portion thereof to the general Treasury, keeping the remainder for themselves. The administration of the country was virtually carried on, generally speaking, by these Hindu Rajas. The village, though they paid rent to the Rajas, practically managed their own affairs. Every village was, in fact, a sort of miniature republic.

Navadweep, popularly called Nadia, situated on the bank of the Bhagirathi about seventy miles north of Calcutta, and a very large and populous city, was under the rule of a Mussalman Governor who resided there. It is said in the book called Chaitanya Bhagabat, that hundreds of thousands bathed at a single ghat (bathing-place) in that city, which moreover

had many such bathing-places. It was not the metropolis of Bengal, nor an emporium of trade, but was famous as a seat of learning. It was, in fact, in that respect the most famous city in the world. The one absorbing idea of all the respectable citizens was the acquisition of knowledge. The old and the young, men and women, among the higher classes, were constantly engaged in intellectual pursuits, as if there was no other business in the world. Wealth, politics, war, pleasures and amusements had no attraction for them. Fighting they abhorred as being the occupation of beasts of prey and unworthy of human beings. Gratification of the senses, they knew, debased the soul, and they had such an aversion for sensual pleasures that no liquor shop was permitted to be established in the city. It was considered disgraceful to hold office, even that of the Prime Minister of the King, an office-holder being likened to a dog.

In the opinion of the citizens, man was born only to acquire knowledge, which was the end and aim of human life. The student was the only being who could claim the title of man. Beauty, rank, power and wealth were nothing in comparison with learning. The education of boys commenced at four. The mother, not to say the father, regularly prayed to God that her son might become a learned man. He that had a daughter wished to marry her, not to a millionaire, but to a man of learning.

The people of Nadia devoted most of their time to the pursuit of knowledge. The learned had no fear of suffering from want, for society maintained them in various ways. During every festival,—and the Hindus have at least one every month,—gifts were made to the learned. One of the principal duties of a wealthy man was to protect, against want, those who were engaged in intellectual and spiritual culture for the benefit of their fellows. Such was the honour bestowed upon learning, that when a wealthy man, proceeding in his state-chair, met a savant in the street, he was obliged to descend therefrom to salute him. In short, the whole

energies of the city were directed towards the creation of learned men.

The intense devotion to learning, by the majority of the citizens of Navadweep, gave a peculiar character to the town, distinguishing it from any other city in the world. Students thronged everywhere. They filled the market-place, the streets, the bathing-ghats and the strand. They assembled in thousands at every convenient spot to hold literary discussions. When the students walked in the street they talked on literary subjects. Literary tournaments were held every day at every ghat of the city. And so earnest were the combatants, that sometimes these tournaments ended in free fights, and the defeated parties had to swim across to the other bank of the river to save themselves. Each student held a book in his left hand,—that being his distinguishing badge to mark him out from others. It was his ornament, his friend and his strength, which secured for him respectful attention everywhere.

In each street there were several Toles (Collèges); and each College contained, according to the Chaitanya Bhagabat, hundreds and, sometimes, thousands of students. Says Thakur Brindaban, himself a citizen, a saint, a student, and an eye-witness: "Thousands every day came to the city from all parts of India, some to begin and some to finish their education, and thousands left every day after having obtained their diplomas."

There were thousands, again, merely temporary sojourners in Navadweep, who had come there either for their own education or to supervise the education of their sons, to pay court to its learned men or to visit the splendid educational institutions with which the place was studded. The student who had been educated as far as possible elsewhere, felt bound to come to Nadia to complete his education and obtain a diploma, without which he could not hope to attain to any considerable status in society.

It was considered a disgrace to take fees for education or for administering justice. Thus the sale of justice or education was unknown. It was moreover considered disgraceful to decline to teach any one who might demand to be taught. The Toles, where thousands got their education, were each presided over by a single Professor; but the more advanced students were bound to devote a portion of their time to the teaching of the less advanced.

Nadia, however, had one great want, namely, that of a proper College for the study of the Nyaya Philosophy,—a want caused by the absence of a text-book from which to teach the subject. This Philosophy was first developed in the land of Goutama Buddha (Mithila), and the Bengalis had to repair thither to study it. The Philosophers of Mithila, keenly aware of their inability to meet in fair fight the more intellectual Bengalis, never permitted their Bengali students of Nyaya to take a copy of the text-book home with them. Ram Bhadra had his Nyaya College in Nadia, but he failed to give full satisfaction to his students for want of a text-book.

Vasudeva Sarvabhauma, however, removed this difficulty. He went to Mithila (Tirhoot) to study Nyaya, and there committed the whole of the text-book to memory; after which he returned to Nadia and established a Nyaya College there. This almost superhuman feat immortalised his name. The first Nyaya College, properly so called, in Bengal, was thus established by Sarvabhau-ma. The Nyaya Philosophy, developed in Mithila, received its further development in Nadia, so that the ideas, which gradually became interwoven in this peculiar product of the Indian mind, were, after successive analyses, so intricate and so subtle as to make, according to Professor Cowell, the European head dizzy, which attempts to master or even to understand them.

This feat enabled Nadia to obtain the very first place in India as a seat of learning, in every branch of knowledge. Out of the

text-book on Nyaya Philosophy, Sarvabhauma developed a philosophy of his own, more profound, comprehensive and subtle than the original, which he called "Chintamani" or "the Gem of Meditation." He had as pupils Bhabananda, Raghunandan, Raghunath, Krishnananda and several others, all of whom left undying fame behind them. Raghunath developed, out of the Chintamani, his great book of Nyaya Philosophy called the "Didheeti," which is perhaps the subtlest book that has ever been produced in any language. Krishnananda's work on Tantra Philosophy is the standard book on the subject. Raghunandan's "Smriti" or Code of Laws, divided into twenty-eight chapters, is regarded as the highest authority in Bengal.

Such were the master-spirits who adorned the College of Sarvabhauma. The works they have left behind excite the wonder of mankind. The subtlest ideas were playthings with them, and they manipulated them as magicians do the instruments of their art.

There was for a time another pupil in the Tole or College of Sarvabhauma. Although the youngest of all, he was no less respected than feared by the students of world-wide celebrity mentioned above, for his incomparable intellect. They felt themselves as pigmies beside him. His name was Nimai—the great Lord Gauranga himself.

The fame of Sarvabhauma led Protap Rudra, the powerful King of Orissa, and the only Hindu Prince then independent on this side of India, to invite him to establish a College at Puri or Jagannath—a holy city in his dominions. He accepted the King's invitation and founded a College there which was resorted to by innumerable students from all parts of India. The loss which Nadia sustained by the withdrawal of Sarvabhauma was more than compensated by the genius and labours of Raghunath and others of his pupils.

A Brahmin of the Vedic class, by name Jagannath Missra, read at the same College with Sarvabhauma. Jagannath's father,

Upendra Missra, lived in the District of Sylhet. He had seven sons, of whom the third, Jagannath, came to Navadweep for his education, and obtained his diploma with credit. He was exceedingly learned as well as very handsome in person, and this led Nilambar Chakrabarti, a celebrated Pandit, to give to him in marriage his exquisitely-beautiful daughter Shachee. Jagannath was persuaded to live with his wife at Nadia. He had successively eight daughters, all of whom died soon after birth. A son was then born to him whom he called Vishwarup. A few years after the birth of this son, another was born, and this was Nimai—the great Avatar of Nadia.

The religious instinct has been always strong in the Hindu mind. It was especially so in former times. In those days the belief in the comparative nothingness of this world was so strong that many men readily gave up society and became ascetics in order to lead a life of austerity and meditation. They did not marry, lest they should love and then suffer the loss of their dear ones. They never acquired property, lest their souls should be attracted towards transient and earthly things. Respectable people, besides, were accustomed to make pilgrimages, travelling on foot to shrines, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of miles away. The performance of pilgrimages was one of the distinguishing marks of a person of the higher ranks of society.

If education was considered a very important thing, the practice of religion was looked upon as the paramount duty of men and women. Indeed, the reason why the people of Nadia were such enthusiasts in regard to the education of the mind was that they expected to secure salvation by it. If the genius of the Western nations lies in the cultivation and development of the exact sciences, the solution of the mysterious problems surrounding the destiny of man was the main object of the students in Nadia and elsewhere in India. They proceeded on the basis that everything earthly is valueless because transient. Even the

knowledge which refers to earthly matters was treated with something like contempt. What they wanted to know was the nature of the soul, and its relationship to God. Of course, Chemistry, Mathematics, Astronomy, Philosophy, Literature, Law, and the like, were cultivated and taught, and that with no little zeal; but the great aim of the greatest number was the solution of the deeper problems which affect the life of man. Every one, man or woman, high or low, went through his or her religious practices. Early in the morning, tens of thousands bathed in the river Bhagirathi, and sat along the bank, engaged in worship. The river itself was covered with flowers dedicated to the Deities. The same scene was repeated in the evening.

One of the most pious, learned, respectable and devoted of these worshippers was Advaita Acharjya, the head of the Vaishnavas, that is, the sect that worships Sree Krishna, the God of infinite love.

THE PRAYER OF ADVAITA.

A FEW miles from the celebrated city of Navadweep, in the town of Santipur, lived Advaita Acharjya. He had also a house at Navadweep, as many respectable men had. The wickedness and misery that prevailed in the world deeply pained his feeling heart. Failing to find any remedy for the evil, he took upon himself to invoke the aid of God Almighty Himself. With a deep and unalterable resolve he sat on the bank of the Bhagirathi to offer up his prayer to Sree Krishna—the Soul and Father of the Universe. He prayed in this manner :

“Father Sree Krishna ! my Lord and beloved Protector ! the misery of mankind pains me. I know, the cause of this misery is their own wickedness. They have forgotten the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and are ceaselessly quarrelling from motives of selfishness, as dogs do over a piece of bone. They ought to know that earthly blessings, being transient, carry with them no real happiness ; yet for such they are sacrificing their future life. They ought to know that Thou art good, merciful and loving, yet Thou hast no place in their hearts ! My beloved Lord ! the sufferings of my fellow-beings rend my heart ; yet I, a sinner like them, can do them no good. Come Thou, therefore, amongst Thy children. Manifest Thyself to them and shew them how good Thou art. Teach them by precept and example how to attain to Thee. By this means only will they learn to venerate and love Thee, and thereby put an end to their own misery. The work is great, and it is Thou alone that canst accomplish it. Come, come, my Lord, who, though invisible, art yet always with us !”

This and such like prayers he was accustomed to offer ; and, while asking the Lord to come, would sometimes raise his voice to

a thunderlike pitch. Sometimes, with folded hands, and weeping the while, he would implore the Lord to manifest Himself. He would say : "Thou art unapproachable, invisible, unknowable, and illimitable. Appear in human form, so that we may approach Thee without fear. Appear in Thy perfect loveliness, so that we may love Thee. It is presumption in me to suggest to Thee what Thou shouldst do for Thy children. But, Lord, my heart breaks to think of the misery of man." And he would then weep like a child. He prayed thus day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year. And thus several years passed. In sickness, in sorrow, in difficulties, Advaita never deviated from the resolve that he had made. He was determined to succeed or die in the attempt. One day, in the midst of his prayers, an unearthly joy dawned suddenly on his heart. He felt that his prayers had been heard, and the fulfilment of his desire led him to dance in an ecstasy of joy, while he repeatedly said : "I have brought the Lord down." His disciple Haridas, who stood by, asked him the reason of his unusual happiness. Advaita said in reply : "I feel that He is come, and the idea fills my heart with ecstasy." But he had no clear notion as to how, when, and where, the Lord would manifest Himself.

THE BELOVED LORD SREE KRISHNA. *

ADVAITA ACHARJYA, as a Vaishnava, addressed his prayers to the Lord Sree Krishna, the last incarnation of the Supreme Being, who had appeared in Mathura, a town in the North-Western Provinces of India, thousands of years before. The story of His life is shortly given in the great religious poem of the Hindus, the *Mahabharat*. But an elaborate account thereof is to be found in the *Sreemat Bhagabat*, the Old Testament of the Vaishnavas, and in other books. Kangsha, a barbarian, forcibly took possession of the throne of Mathura. He married his sister to Vasudev, a scion of the Jadav race. On the day when Vasudev was leading his bride home, Kangsha himself was the driver of the carriage which conveyed them. Suddenly they were all aware of a heavenly voice which, addressing Kangsha, said: "Fool! the eighth child of thy sister will be the cause of thy death."

Kangsha immediately drew his sword with the intention of killing his sister, but was dissuaded by Vasudev from the commission of the great crime of killing a woman from whom personally he had nothing to fear, on the understanding that he should be at liberty to do whatever he liked with any children she might bear.

* For a due comprehension of the life of Sree Gauranga, a knowledge of the life of Sree Krishna is essential. On the other hand, no one, without a thorough knowledge of the life of Sree Gauranga, will be able to clearly understand the true significance of Sree Krishna Leela. If the reader finds any thing incomprehensible in the life of Sree Krishna, he will find it thoroughly explained in the life of Sree Gauranga.

Pursuant to this agreement, whenever his sister Devaki bore a child he killed it. Vasudev and Devaki were subjected to the strict vigilance of guards, so that they could not conceal the children that were born to them.

At length God Almighty Himself entered the womb of Devaki. Under directions from heaven, Vasudev carried the child, who was born at midnight, to the house of his friend Nanda, a village lord in Gokul. When Vasudev took the child in his arms to bear it away from the house, the doors opened of their own accord, the guards fell asleep, and every obstacle was removed by some unseen influence. He had to cross the river Jamuna, and it became fordable at his approach. Jasoda, the wife of Nanda, had been delivered of a daughter at the same time. Vasudev entered the lying-in-room of the sleeping Jasoda, left his son there, and carried away her daughter with him, and placed her by the side of Devaki. As every thing was done under divine guidance, Vasudev found no difficulty in carrying out the above arrangement; and neither Nanda nor Jasoda, nor indeed any one besides himself and Devaki, was aware of the exchange which had been made.

In what has just been stated, the reader will no doubt find much that at first sight may seem to be a tissue of absurdities. He must, however, bear with them and other statements still more extraordinary, which are to follow. He will understand thoroughly the aim and the object of the life of Sree Krishna as given in the Sreemat Bhagabat, the Old Testament of the Vaishnavas, and other Vaishnava books, when he comes to study the sayings and doings of Sree Gauranga. Moreover, such apparent absurdities are also to be found in the Old Testament of the Christians. On the other hand, in the books treating of the life of Sree Gauranga, the reader will find scarcely any thing to tax his credulity.

In the morning Kangsha found, as he believed, that his sister had been delivered of a female child, and he wanted to destroy

it. But as he lifted it up to break its head, the infant slipped out of his hands, declaring at the same time, that the child whom he feared was already born and out of his reach. This infant was no other than the Goddess Durga or Maya. Baulked of his intention, Kangsha resolved on the destruction of all the new-born children in his dominions, by artifice and other means. Kangsha had reasons to suspect that the child from whom he apprehended misfortune was no other than the child of Nanda and Jasoda.

Sree Krishna, meanwhile, was being reared in the house of Nanda. Nanda paid rent to Kangsha for the grazing lands that he enjoyed, he being a milk-man, and, therefore, in possession of a number of cattle. All his co-villagers were likewise milk-men, and lived a very simple, uneventful, and happy life. With the advent of the child, Sree Krishna, amongst them, however, danger after danger began to overtake them. This was, because, as we said, Kangsha, suspecting that Sree Krishna might be the child from whom his death would come to him, sought to destroy him with the help of demons.

These demons were all, one by one, destroyed by Sree Krishna. Thus, when Putna came to suckle the infant Sree Krishna, and by this means poison him to death, Sree Krishna sucked the life-blood out of the witch. She had entered the house with the appearance of a beautiful matron, but, when dead, she was seen to be a hideous monster. Another demon came in the guise of a whirl-wind, in that manner to spirit away the divine baby. But this demon was likewise foiled. Then, as we read in the account of Bakasur, a demon arrived in the semblance of a heron and tried to swallow Sree Krishna entire. But he too was killed. There was yet another demon, who had the appearance of a donkey. This animal-demon had in his charge a fine palm orchard, and would never permit any one to partake of the fruits. He himself being a donkey, could not, of course, pluck and partake of them, and whenever any one came to the orchard with that object, he,

braying the while in a ridiculous and dissonant voice, would set upon and kick him to death. He too was killed. These and many other demons tried to destroy the child, Sree Krishna, but they only succeeded in bringing about their own destruction.

These attacks on Sree Krishna led the whole colony of milkmen to leave Gokul and proceed to Brindaban, on the other side of the river Jamuna, close to the city of Mathura.

There are pious people who implicitly believe in the above stories, as there are pious people who consider them to be mere parables. Thus, according to the latter, Putna is no real creature, but represents materialistic education, which teaches infidelity and atheism ; the whirl-wind, fruitless discussion ; and the heron, a humbug or a hypocrite. In Sanskrit literature, a heron is made to represent a hypocrite, because it has, like a holy Hindu, a tuft on its head, and rests in the posture of a religious man engaged in meditation, its object being, however, to catch its prey, and not to purify its soul. As for the donkey, he is, of course, no other than the priest who will neither enjoy the fruits of religion himself, nor allow others to do so. In short, according to a certain class of pious Vaishnavas, the demons described above, are only influences which smother the religion of love and *bhakti* to God.

The incidents, just related, have, however, very little to do with the life of Sree Gauranga. Sree Krishna grew up in the house of Nanda and under the care of his supposed mother Jasoda. His complexion was dark, but light shone through it. He was a child of dazzling beauty, and his mother dressed him with such consummate taste as to enhance his personal charms. He attracted all towards him, and hence he was called Krishna, that is, one who attracts. The frolicsome child played tricks on his mother, which only had the effect of increasing her love for him. In fact, he was loved by the people of Brindaban more than they loved any one else ; wives loved him more than they loved their husbands ;

mothers loved him more than they loved their own children. This was, because, Sree Krishna was the soul, the origin, the prime mover of every thing, and, therefore, attracted the souls of all to him.

Sree Krishna passed eleven years of his life in Brindaban. He was employed by Nanda, his supposed father, in leading the cows to the grazing lands and back. Thither all the cowboys of the village accompanied him, as also Balaram, his elder brother. Balaram was the son of Vasudev, the father of Krishna, by another wife, who was called Rohinee. Vasudev, the father of Sree Krishna, and Nanda, his guardian and protector, were good friends. Fearing that his brother-in-law, Kangsha, might do harm to his son Balaram, and his wife Rohinee, he (Vasudev) placed them also under the protection of his friend Nanda. Thus Krishna and Balaram were sons of the same father by different mothers, and grew up together in the house of Nanda.

Now, Balaram himself was likewise divine. He was a manifestation of God Almighty ; the Supreme Being, however, was Krishna. It must be remembered that all the important characters in Brindaban, who surrounded Sree Krishna, were devotees of God, who had attained salvation and been highly blest, and who had taken human forms to help Sree Krishna in carrying out his great work in this world of man.

This great work was to teach mankind how He should be loved by them disinterestedly, not in expectation of favours, but for Himself alone—to enjoy his companionship in Golok, which is the highest Heaven. He had implanted in man the feeling of love, and given him friends and relations with whom to cultivate it, so that by this means he should at length learn to love Him. Thus, Sree Krishna's work in this world was to show how this feeling of love, cultivated in human society, might be ultimately directed towards God for the purpose of securing man's salvation.

Now, what is salvation? It is not extinction, nor the merging of man's soul in the Great Fountain of Energy, but the securing of a higher existence, and the everlasting companionship of God.

Sree Krishna and Balaram, with other young lads, led their herds every morning to the pastures which were surrounded by the forests of Brindaban. His mother always parted with Sree Krishna with tears in her eyes; for, she could not easily bear being separated from her son even for the few hours that he would be out of her sight. On their way to the fields the boys were accustomed to amuse themselves with dancing, singing, and the blowing of horns. In the jungles they would spend their time in all sorts of sports, in which, sometimes, Sree Krishna was defeated, and sometimes he won. They would sometimes swim in the Jamuna, and sometimes gather wild fruits and eat them. The young lads had no notion whatever that Sree Krishna was God Almighty. They regarded him only as one of themselves. Yet they all loved him so intensely that they were ready to give up their lives to meet his slightest wish. They were, in return, intensely loved by Sree Krishna, and so impartially, that each thought that he was his particular favourite. When the time for returning home came, Sree Krishna, who carried an ordinary bamboo flute in his hand, played upon it, whereupon any of the cows that might have wandered out of sight, as man oftentimes do forgetting his sweet relation with God, would immediately gallop toward him with uplifted tails, and on their approaching him, would lick his hand, smell his body, and show, by these and other signs, their love for him, and their intense pleasure at being summoned by him.

Even the vegetable world showed its love and veneration for Him. When Sree Krishna stood under a tree, it immediately burst into blooms and shed its blossoms on his head. The wild deer had no dread of him, but would lovingly follow him; and peacocks, in like manner, would dance before him, to express the pleasure

which his presence gave them. In the evening, Sree Krishna, returning with his friends, would find his mother waiting at the door, with open arms, to clasp him to her bosom.

Sree Krishna was eleven. But yet his mother, his father, his uncle and other elder relations, saw in him only a boy of some five years. His friends regarded him simply as a boy of about their own age, only a little younger. Young women saw in him a youth of surpassing beauty. Wise men regarded him as wisdom personified ; and wicked men feared him as an exacting judge.

It happened one day that Sree Krishna was seen by Radha leaning against a Kadamba tree, on the bank of the Jamuna. She went every day to bathe in the Jamuna, bathing in that river being one of the ways of attaining to Sree Krishna.* Radha is the fountain of all beauty. She was married to a man, who had a physical deformity, unfitting him for marital intercourse.

Radha saw Sree Krishna on the bank of the Jamuna, and Sree Krishna saw Radha. Radha was bewitched by the charms of Sree Krishna, and Sree Krishna was bewitched by the charms of Radha. Radha was so affected that she could with difficulty return home leaving him behind. She adopted all sorts of excuse to linger on the way, that she might have yet another glance at "the thief of her heart." When she did come home, she was found to be a changed girl ; and by degrees she became listless, pensive, meek, reserved and careless about her personal appearance and comforts. She no longer bestowed her former care on dressing herself, was indifferent respecting her food, and hardly slept at night. Sometimes she smiled and sometimes she wept, why she did not know ; she looked up to the heavens, and it seemed as if she saw somebody there. For, she would look up and then hang down her head, her cheeks suffused with blushes, as if she had seen her beloved. Sometimes she would look up and pray with

* Jamuna represents *bhakti*, and this bathing in the Jamuna thus means purification of the soul by the cultivation of *bhakti*.

folded hands ; while tears trickled down her cheeks. If she heard the name of Sree Krishna she swooned away. In short, she was overwhelmed by her love for Sree Krishna.*

At night, Sree Krishna played his flute, with which he never parted ; and when he played, none heard but those whom he meant to hear. Those who heard it, however, found themselves entranced by the sound, and were attracted irresistibly towards him.

Radha heard the flute and found her name uttered in delicious sounds, as if she was being implored to approach them ; and thus she was irresistibly drawn towards Sree Krishna. She forgot her duty to her husband, to herself, and to her relations, and sought the player, Sree Krishna, accompanied by her maids. She found Sree Krishna on the bank of the Jamuna, in the midst of wild flowers, in a secret and lonely place, far away from human habitations. There they met, and greeted each other with a loving embrace.

They sat, side by side, on a cushion of flowers, under a flowery canopy, each rivalling the other in personal beauty.

Peacocks danced before them, and in the trees about them Koels, Moynas and other birds sang for their pleasure, while at their feet flowed the Jamuna, which, being disturbed by a gentle breath of wind that was blowing, sent forth a thousand reflections of the moon shining above, and made the lotus flowers, that bloomed on its surface, wave to and fro, as if to express the joy of the occasion.

The maids, overcome with joy, sang glory to Radha-Krishna ; and, eventually, Radha herself knelt before her Lord and uttered this prayer : “ What can I give Thee, my Beloved ? The only possession I have is Thyself. So I shall give Thee Thyself and

* This state of the devotee is called “Purva Raga” or attraction for the beloved before union.

be Thy servant. Thou art mine and I am Thine, for ever and ever. Whatever I possess comes from Thee. I lose nothing, therefore, by giving Thy property to Thyself. Listen, my Beloved ; Thou hast many like me, but I have only Thee."

God Almighty is made up of negative and positive principles. Radha is no other than the negative principle of the God-head. She was born to help Sree Krishna in his work in this world, which was to shew to mankind the nature and scope of Radha's love to Sree Krishna, so that man might try to imitate her, and thus learn to love Him and possess Him.

One day, when Radha, with her attendants, was entering Brindaban, Sree Krishna, with His companions, obstructed their passage. Radha was given to understand that into Brindaban, the abode of peace and love, where Sree Krishna, the God of love, reigned,—the God whose only strength lay in his flute, by which he bewitched men and women—no one might enter without paying a toll. "Pay toll and then enter Brindaban," said Sree Krishna. Radha replied that she was absolutely poor and had nothing to give. "Then," said Sree Krishna, "give yourself, body and soul." Thus when one wishes to enter Brindaban and to attain to Sree Krishna, the God of love, he must first of all pay the required toll which is himself, absolutely, unconditionally, unreservedly, ungrudgingly, and gratefully to Him.

It was on the clearest and fairest night of the year that Sree Krishna began to invoke the Gopees, that is to say, the women of Brindaban, otherwise called Braja. Braja was the place where Nanda and the other milk-men and their families resided. Brindaban was a beautiful forest tract in the vicinity of Braja. In the midst of this forest, Sree Krishna, with his flute in hand, was enjoying the beautiful moon-lit scenery around him. After a little time He played upon his flute, and the Gopees, who heard him, were enchanted by the strains.

They were, at that moment, engaged in various household duties. Some were eating their supper ; some attending on their husbands ; some suckling their infants ; others cooking their food. But one and all left their occupations and prepared to fly to Sree Krishna in Brindaban. The women who were suckling their babes, cast them aside as one might a disagreeable burden, and prepared to depart. In such haste did they dress themselves for the flight, that they put their ear-rings in their noses, and their nose-rings in their ears, wrapt their vests round their heads, and their veils round their breasts. Thus ludicrously attired, they prepared to start. Their husbands, parents, children, and friends barred their passage ; they were advised, implored, and threatened to remain. But they would not acquiesce. A couple of strong-minded husbands went so far as to tie their wives to posts. Thus prevented from going in the flesh, they, one and all, began ardently to pray to Sree Krishna for their release. The result was that their souls left their bodies and fled to Sree Krishna. The absence of those who fled to Sree Krishna was not, however, perceived by their husbands and relations, for their bodies were still with them.*

The Gopees proceeded on foot to Brindaban as fast as they could go. They took no notice of each other. Having arrived at Brindaban they surrounded Sree Krishna, whom they found standing, gracefully leaning against a tree, and illuminating the whole forest with his dazzling beauty.

Sree Krishna received them with a fascinating smile, and addressed them thus : " What brings you, beautiful creatures, here ? Were you not afraid of the dangers of the way in coming hither at this time of night ? Or, have you come for protection from any danger ? Please say, what is the matter ? Here are my

* This implies that it was only the souls of the Gopees that had gone to Sree Krishna.

arms willing and ready to attend to your wishes. Or, perhaps you have come to enjoy the beautiful scenery and the pleasure which Brindaban affords. If that be so, you are welcome."

The Gopees, in reply, said that they were not in need of protection, nor had they come to admire the beauties of Brindaban. They had no property which they cared for, and, therefore, they had no fear of losing any thing. As for pleasure, they could have no other than what came from Him (Sree Krishna). They then added, forgetful of their wonted modesty: "After having drawn us away from all that we held most dear, by Thy irresistible flute, why dost Thou now want to know why we have come to Thee? We have come to surrender ourselves unreservedly to Thee." Sree Krishna replied: "A woman must for ever remain attached to her husband. Do as other wives do, and refrain from committing the sin and bringing upon yourselves the scandal of accepting a lover who is not your husband." To which the Gopees answered: "It is futile to attempt to teach their duty to simple-minded women, whom Thou hast bewitched by Thy beauty and Thy flute. We have lost all our sense of duty and all fear of scandal and its consequences. If it be a sin to yield ourselves to Thee, we will suffer it. Better hell with Thee than the highest heaven without Thee. Moreover, as regards the sin against which Thou dost warn us, it is true, we have a duty towards our husbands. But art Thou not the Lord of all, the Lord of our earthly lords? Art Thou not the centre whither all tend? Do not, therefore, try to deceive us, simple and ignorant women as we are, by an argument of that kind."

Sree Krishna, who could read their hearts, was moved almost to tears by the ardent love displayed towards Him by these devoted women. Yet He made one more effort to test the fidelity of the Gopees. "Do you not know," said he, "that I am above all human emotions? How then is it possible for me to gratify you by accepting the position of your lover?"

The Gopees began to weep, and said: "If Thou holdest Thyself above human emotions, how are we to love Thee and make Thee love us in return? How are we, who are women, to associate with Thee, if Thou remainest above the influence of human emotions? Pray, do not trifle with us. If Thou refuse to satisfy our irresistible craving for Thee, we shall die at Thy lotus feet." *

Sree Krishna was deeply affected by this further expression of their devotion to Him. He was thus moved to assume human emotions for the purpose of fulfilling the aspirations of the Gopees.

The Gopees, thus blessed in a manner above all other women, became suddenly inflated with the idea of their own importance. They considered themselves as the most exalted of all beings. This hurt Sree Krishna who desired that the Gopees should be absolutely meek. He, therefore, disappeared from their midst!

The Gopees, not finding Sree Krishna among them, were overwhelmed with sorrow. They began to search for him with loud lamentations, and gradually their reason became affected. They began to ask of the trees, whether they had seen Sree Krishna coming that way. Thus they addressed every creeper, shrub, bird, and animal. Sometimes, they looked up heavenward, and with tearful eyes, prayed to Him to show Himself to them again, "for life is dreary without Thee, O Beloved!" Their souls being solely occupied by the image of Sree Krishna, some gradually came to think that they were themselves Sree Krishna, and some, that they were His followers, and so they began to

* It is perfectly true that God is above all human emotions, but if He does not assume human emotions, then man's association with Him becomes an impossibility and religion is reduced to a farce. In the same manner, it is all quite true that He is as big as the Universe, but unless He assumes the form of a human being there cannot be any tender relationship between Him and man.

enact his "Leela." * Thus, one became Putna and another infant Krishna, and the former began to suckle the latter ; and yet another, fully believing that she was Sree Krishna who had deserted them, stood, leaning against a tree, in the elegant manner He was accustomed to do ; and, making a piece of stick do duty for a flute, began to play on it !

When they had almost despaired of ever seeing Sree Krishna again, He suddenly appeared in their midst, dressed with exquisite taste, which seemed to enhance His ravishing beauty. The Gopees all rushed towards Him in a state of rapture, and were received by Him with a divine and bewitching smile. They surrounded Him ; some caught hold of His hands and the touch sent a thrill of joy to their hearts ; some touched his feet, some his neck, some seemed to devour his beauty with their eyes rivetted on his face ; some began to smell his body, which emitted a delicious fragrance or perfume that attracted the bees to Him, mistaking His body for sweet-scented flowers.

The Gopees, feeling hurt at the conduct of Krishna, asked Him a few questions, by way of charging him with ingratitude. Said they : " How dost Thou regard the conduct of those, (1) who, having received a service, give one in return ; (2) who bestow a service without having received one ; (3) who, having received a service, offer nothing in return ? " The object of the questions was to insinuate that though they had served Sree Krishna, heart and soul, He had ungratefully abandoned them.

Sree Krishna replying, said : " Those who serve in return for a service, do not serve Me but serve themselves. Those who serve without having been served, are either philanthropists who serve others because they cannot help themselves, or they bear a

* "Leela" is an incident on earth in which God Almighty has had a direct hand.

disinterested love such as parents do for their children. Those who do not serve in return for service are either ungrateful, or are persons who have conquered all their desires. But, dear creatures, do not fancy for a moment that I do not serve those who serve me. It is true that when people serve Me, I do not always immediately serve them in return, but I act thus, simply with a view to whet their love for Me. If I disappeared and gave you the trouble of searching for Me, My object was to make your feelings more ardent towards Me. You have left every thing, which women hold dear, for My sake, and My immortal life will not suffice to enable Me to discharge My debt of acknowledgment to you. Meanwhile, let your own goodness be the payment of the debt I owe you."

Having said this Sree Krishna began the *Rash* or the extatic dance. Each Gopee had a Sree Krishna by her side. They held each other's hands and began to sing and dance. Each thought that she was alone with Sree Krishna, and was not aware of the presence of the others. Sometimes the Gopees sang the glories of Sree Krishna, and He praised their skill; and sometimes Sree Krishna sang of the goodness of the Gopees, and they glorified Him.

After having described the *Rash*, the *Sāmat* Bhagabat, the Old Testament of the Vaishnavas, raises the question whether it was meet that God Almighty should be found in the act of making love to the wives of others. It disposes of the question in these terms: "Little mortals have no business to criticise the actions of the Almighty. He takes the form of man to do good to men. It was with this object that He condescended to assume human emotions. He is the Soul of souls—not only of the Gopees but of their husbands as well, and, therefore, He is the real Husband of the Gopees, as also of their husbands. Besides, says the Bhagabat, the husbands never perceived the absence of their wives from them. They all felt that they were

by their side." It must also be borne in mind that Sree Krishna left Brindaban when he was only eleven, so he was then only a boy.

Well, about this and other matters we should have some thing to say hereafter. Suffice it to observe now, that when Sree Gauranga performed the Rash Leela to explain what it was, there was not one woman in the assembly.

When Kangsha came to know definitely that the Being, Who was to destroy him, was no other than Sree Krishna, the adopted son of his subject, Nanda, he resolved to murder his enemy by a stratagem. He organized a military tournament, and invited all the warriors in the land to take part in it. Nanda was invited to come and witness the ceremony. A separate letter was sent to Sree Krishna though he was but a boy. Akrur was the party charged to carry the invitation letter to Braja, and persuade Sree Krishna and Balaram to come. Akrur readily undertook the mission, for he hated Kangsha as a tyrant, and he, as a pious man, knew that Sree Krishna was God Almighty Himself, and that his brother, Balaram, was also like him a divine Being. When Akrur had reached Braja and explained his mission to the inhabitants of Braja, the news was received by them with great heartburnings, for they could not bear to part with Krishna even for the couple of days which, it was thought, was about the time that would elapse between his starting on and returning from his mission. The entire community at Braja grieved sorely, while, Jasoda, Radha and the cow-boy friends of Sree Krishna fainted away as Sree Krishna, Balaram, Nanda, and their attendants left the place for Mathura. Sree Krishna and Balaram attended the tournament and succeeded in killing all the athletes and monsters brought forward to compete or fight with them, and finally Kangsha himself. Immediately after Kangsha's death, Ugrasena, the rightful sovereign, was installed

on the throne by Sree Krishna who, however, retained all real power in his own hands.

Sree Krishna remained at Mathura, and Nanda was obliged to return to Braja without him. When the people of Braja saw Nanda coming alone weeping, they surmised that Sree Krishna was not with him. This was a terrible grief to the inhabitants of Braja, who loved Sree Krishna more than they did themselves. Jasoda, in the agony of her grief, lost her reason, and Radha and the cow-boys were similarly affected. Jasoda could be seen going about searching for Krishna in every nook and corner of Braja, forgetful of the fact that he was not there, but far away in Mathura. Similarly Radha would often enter the forest of Brindaban, hoping to meet her beloved there. Sometimes she would mistake a *Tamal* tree for the lord of her heart and address it in endearing terms ; sometimes she would fancy that she had discovered the foot-prints of Krishna, and, sitting beside them, would worship them with flowers, and bathe them with her tears. The cow-boys in the same manner became mad with grief. Every one in Braja wept for Krishna and gave vent in various ways to the agony they felt on account of his absence.

At Mathura Sree Krishna likewise passed his days pining for his friends in Braja. Mathura did not please him. The hollow, insincere manifestations of loyalty that he received there only led him to hanker more for the disinterested love and sincere devotion that he had received in Braja. But he did not return to Brindaban, knowing as he did that if love is sincere, it is intensified by separation, and he wanted to intensify the love of the inhabitants of Braja for Him, because love for Him is the greatest of His blessings to man. He, however, sent one of His devotees, Uddhab, to Braja to let His friends there know that He was well, and as attached to them as ever. Now, this Uddhab was a devoted servant of Krishna, and worshipped Him according to the rigid forms prescribed in

religious books. He held in scant esteem the intelligence, devotion and reverence of the ignorant milk-men and milk-women of Braja, with respect to whom he had heard that Sree Krishna was so devoted to them, that He had wept with them, implored them to forgive Him when angry, and loved them more than he loved his own life.

Uddhab, in short, was jealous of the simple people of Braja. He fancied that he, being the most devoted and strict observer of all forms, must, in every respect, be the most worthy devotee of Sree Krishna, and, therefore, more deserving of His favours than the milk-men and milk-women of Braja. "His ways are a mystery," thought he, "and certainly His sense of justice must be different from ours". Uddhab was sent to Braja in order that he might be convinced of his folly, by realizing why the milk-men and milk-women had won His heart, which even he had not been able to do.

When Uddhab reached Braja he saw the entire village in mourning ; so great was their misery because Sree Krishna was not among them. They had, of course, no knowledge of the forms and rules of worship which Uddhab knew, and which he so rigorously followed. But the name of Krishna threw them into an ecstasy of emotion. Their whole soul was occupied by Him. They had nothing to ask of Him. They only loved Him—loved Him for His own sake. Uddhab fell at the feet of Radha, and admitted that if she had won Sree Krishna she deserved it. He came back convinced that if there was any method by which that great Being—impartial, incorruptible, undeceivable—could be won, it was by such purely disinterested love as the inhabitants of Braja felt towards Him. He noticed with surprise that the milk-men and milk-women of Braja, though they had no knowledge of philosophy or of the forms of worship prescribed in religious books, and practised no sort of austerity, had yet made God Almighty their own, by loving Him

as a child, as Jasoda and Nanda did ; by loving Him as a friend, as the cow-boys did ; by loving Him as a master, as the common people of Braja did ; and by loving Him as a husband or lover, as Radha and her attendant Gopees did.

It should be observed that Sree Krishna was regarded as their master by the inhabitants of Mathura just as He was by the simple people of Braja. But while the latter obeyed Him as their master for no motive of self-interest, the former, for the most part, served Him for gain. In Mathura Sree Krishna was regarded with respect and awe because of His regal power and the pomp which surrounded him. His subjects there, who were Kshetrias or men of the warrior class, respected Him for his unlimited powers, and they served Sree Krishna accordingly. There Sree Krishna wore a regal crown, the symbol of greatness, on his head, and held a sceptre, the symbol of power, in his hand. There He dressed superbly, His royal robe being embroidered with gold and glittering with diamonds and pearls. But, in Braja, the people, who were all of the cowherd class, lived only to love each other. They desired neither wealth nor power nor any worldly greatness. They loved Sree Krishna because they could not help it ; and there Krishna showed himself as a most beautiful boy, with a flute in his hand, with a head-dress made of flowers and peacock feathers, and with a garland of wild flowers round his neck.

Radha was inconsolable because of the absence of her Lord. Sometimes she would fancy that Krishna was come, and great was her joy. But soon she would feel that He had again forsaken her, and thereupon would swoon away. Sometimes she would feel that Sree Krishna was coming to see her, and then she would tastefully decorate with the choicest flowers the secret bower in Brindaban where she and Sree Krishna had been accustomed to meet. There she would wait and wait, and often ask her attendants to look out to see if He was coming.

At the slightest sound, she would joyfully exclaim, "Ah ! He is coming at last." But where was Sree Krishna? He was then in Mathura! And when at length she came to realize the fact that He was not near and that it was delusive hope which had led her to make preparations for His reception, she would fall into a swoon once more.

Eventually, seeing that Radha was at the point of death, her attendants went to Mathura, where they found Sree Krishna seated on His golden throne. They addressed Him thus : "Thou hast now become a King and hast adorned Thyself with jewels. Thou art now surrounded by mighty courtiers, who sing Thy praise ; while learned pandits chant to Thee difficult texts from the religious books, all from motives of self-interest. They all try to deceive Thee by calling Thee merciful, though, in their heart of hearts, they neither love nor honour Thee. But we are simple villagers ; the only tribute that we can give Thee is our spontaneous love, and the only throne we can offer Thee is our simple and guileless hearts. In Brindaban we had, at one time, a Lord in the person of a most beautiful youth, who sat under a Kadamba tree and ruled our hearts, while we washed His feet with tears of joy."

Sree Krishna wept on being reminded of the devotion to Him of the inhabitants of Braja. He at once started for Brindaban with the attendant ladies of Radha, to see and console the latter, who had been described to him as being nearly bereft of her reason from grief such as no woman had ever felt before.

In Brindaban the milkmen and women worshipped *Prem* and *Bhakti* ; in Mathura the Kshetrias worshipped sovereignty. If Radha was the beloved of Krishna in Brindaban, Kubja was his Queen in Mathura. When Sree Krishna rose to proceed to Brindaban, Kubja protested. She said, " Why dost Thou forsake me ? " Sree Krishna replied : " The people of Braja want me, and I must go there. You wanted my wealth and position, and you

have got them. Let me go to them who want Me. Be you satisfied with my gifts, for which you wanted me, and which have been showered upon you. ”

When Sree Krishna returned to Braja, Radha was roused by her attendants with this joyful tidings : “Thy life, thy Lover has come.” Radha started up with joy, and looking round, saw Krishna in the garb of a king. Immediately she covered her face with her veil, and turning her back upon Him, said : “ I loved a youth of my rank ; I cannot love a king. The crown on his head and the royal staff in his hand frighten me. I want my lover back, I do not want a king, or an avenger of wrongs. ” Sree Krishna hastily cast aside his kingly apparel and arrayed himself in the simple dress he had been used to wear at Braja, and then Krishnamayee, that is to say, she who is always in and with Krishna, clasped Him to her bosom.

We have, in the above, noticed some of the salient features of the Krishna Leela. One important Leela, however, which occurred before Krishna had left Brindaban, remains to be told. It was performed when Radha turned away from her lover in a fit of jealousy. We will here give a short yet complete account of the repugnance which Radha on this occasion displayed towards Krishna, because of her jealousy, in order to give the reader a clear idea of the part which the divine pair then played, the object of which will be explained later on. It happened on a certain day that Radha was aware that Sree Krishna would meet her at night in the seclusion of a sacred and secret bower in Brindaban. Thither she proceeded with her maidens. This procession is called the *Abhisar* of Radha. Having arrived at the bower she directed her attendants to make the necessary preparations to give Sree Krishna a suitable reception. They accordingly gathered the choicest flowers, with some of which they decorated the bower and with others made garlands. They carpeted the bower with flowers and young leaves, and filled the air with freshly distilled

perfumes. These preparations for the reception of Sree Krishna are known by the name of *Basak Sajjya*.

But Sree Krishna failed to put in an appearance, at which Radha was dreadfully disappointed. Sometimes she offered prayers to Him to come and soothe her burning heart, sometimes she recounted His mercies, and by this means tried to procure consolation for herself. Her disappointment and consequent despondency are known as the *Utkantha* of Radha. When she had passed the night there in this condition, Sree Krishna made his appearance, just as morning dawned and Radha had almost reached the point of death from His separation.

Now, Sree Krishna had been detained by Chandrabali, a maiden of Brindaban and the rival of Radha herself. She was not possessed of the absolutely pure and intense love of Radha, but she was a great deal more artful. What had occurred was this : While on His way to Radha on the previous night, Chandrabali waylaid Him and almost forcibly conducted Him to her bower. Though unwilling to accompany her, Sree Krishna could not command the rudeness to refuse, and so consented to pass the night with her.

When He now approached the disappointed Radha, He stood before her with folded hands and trembling with agitation. Radha seeing him thus affected would have excused Him but for one incident, viz, the discovery of the marks that Chandrabali's teeth had left on His cheek !

This so incensed Radha that she refused to have any thing further to do with Sree Krishna. She said that He did not deserve the love which she had bestowed upon Him, and that she would henceforth never think of conquering His affections by love, but would stoop to the device of gaining His favours by hollow and insincere words of praise. Sree Krishna fell on His knees, and clasped her feet with both His hands—those divine hands, as delicate and soft as the newly budded leaves of the mango-

tree—with which He is wont to bless man. But Radha was inexorable. This part of the Leela is called *Mān*. *

When Sree Krishna left Radha, she tried for sometime to compose her mind ; but she saw Sree Krishna in every thing, for her intense love for Him remained. She again began to long for His company, and Sree Krishna Himself also became disconsolate, because He knew that there was not a soul in the universe who loved Him, for His own sake, as Radha did. So a re-union was soon brought about. Then Radha confessed to Him the cause of her anger. She told Him that she knew that He was the beloved of all—that every one should desire to possess Him, and that Chandrabali, she was aware, had done nothing wrong in enticing Him away from her, but that the mark of her teeth on His cheek had offended her. “I thought,” said Radha, “that a woman who, like Chandrabali, served Thee for her own pleasure, had no right to possess Thee, and it was to instruct Thee in this matter that I thus suddenly cast Thee off.”

The grand idea that underlies the Vaishnava Philosophy is that there are two principles in existence, namely, (1) the positive, male or creative being, and (2) the negative, female or created being. The positive principle attracts, and the negative is attracted. Hence, according to the Vaishnavas, the highest form of worship is that in which the devotee spiritually transforms himself into a female, united by pure love with the Supreme Being, or the only male Being in existence, and Radha is the perfect model of such a worshipper. The Leela that we have

* When the celebrated Saint and poet Jaydeva was composing the “Man Leela,” he was inspired to write that Sree Krishna had fallen at the feet of Radha to ask for forgiveness. But he could not bring himself to recount such a humiliating action in connection with the Lord Almighty. He left his writing materials and went to bathe. Sree Krishna, it is stated, took that opportunity of assuming the form of Jaydeva, and of putting down the couplet which the saint had refused to indite.

briefly sketched above, though apparently material, is essentially spiritual, and all Vaishnava works are at one on this point. To the Vaishnava it is no myth, no creation of the imagination, but presents an ideal of the love of God for man, and of man for his Maker—an ideal which the follower of any system of sound religion must have in view.

When Mirabai, the Rajpoot Princess, who left every thing for her love for Krishna, visited the renowned Rup Goswami of Brindaban, one of the chief bhaktas of Sree Gauranga, Rup, an ascetic of the highest order, refused to see her on the ground that he was precluded from seeing the face of a woman. As a fact, Mirabai was a most beautiful young Princess, and he had not much faith in her pretensions. Hearing the message of Rup, Mirabai replied, "Is he then a male? If so, he has no access to Brindaban. Males cannot enter there, and if the Goddess of Brindaban comes to know of his presence she will turn him out. For, does not the great Goswami know that there is but one male in existence, namely, my beloved Kanai Lal (an endearing name of Krishna,) and that all besides are females?" Rup now understood that Mirabai was really a staunch devotee of Krishna, and so agreed to see her.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE KRISHNA-LEELA.

IN India there are philosophers who consider that the soul of man is a spark from the Great Soul, wherein it again merges after it has attained due purification. This profession of faith is conveyed by the affirmation: "He and I are one and the same." They, therefore, deny the utility of worship, or prayer, or what are called pious acts. They say that God can do neither any good nor any harm to man. Man is the arbiter of his own destiny; he builds his own future. If he acts righteously he can purify himself without the help of God and thus attain salvation. If he does not, God can do him no harm; he must suffer for the consequence of his own acts. These are the Advaitabadees, who practise austerities for the sake of purifying their souls.

There are others, the Daitabadees, who believe that man is a separate being from God, and that his paramount duty on earth is to attain to the lotus feet of God, and thereby secure an everlasting happy future. This was taught by Christ, Mahomed and Sree Gauranga. The question that now remains to be considered, is the way in which to attain to Him. The following is the Vaishnava view of salvation. A Vaishnava is one who is a follower of Sree Krishna and Sree Gauranga.

God, according to the Vaishnavas, is infinitely wise, infinitely good, and infinitely merciful, and loves man with an intense love. That being the case, it is foolish in the extreme for man, who, in his ignorance, cannot possibly know what is really

good for him, to pray to Him for favours. It is equally foolish to try to please Him by insincere flattery, or by offerings which must be worthless to Him. On the other hand, sincere praise and worship of God and communion with Him, are, according to the Vaishnavas, the sole object of human existence. These, however, must be done, not for favours to come, but for the ecstasy that attends their due performance, and for the virtue of purification which they possess. This purification makes man fitted for the companionship of God. And when he has been able, by this means, to create in himself a love for God, he is by a natural process drawn towards Him.

Thus, man must not only pray to God but also try to keep himself in touch with Him in all possible ways. Hence it is that every Vaishnava keeps by him an image of God, made either of metal or stone, which he tends with loving care. He bathes his image, gives it good things to eat, decks it with flowers, lulls it to sleep, prays to it, talks to it, and sings before it, as he would do to a dear companion.

Now, as the great source of this universe is invisible, unapproachable and inconceivable, this is the manner in which a Vaishnava tries to bring himself into touch with his Creator. When he has progressed thus far, he casts away the material accessories, and does all these things in his heart. He then worships and communes with the spiritual image of Sree Krishna, which he has enshrined in his heart of hearts, and presents Him with offerings of spiritual flowers, spiritual scents, and spiritual food.

A man, by thus keeping himself constantly in touch with God, not only purifies, ennobles and develops his soul, as we said before, but enjoys an ecstasy which is above all earthly pleasures. But then, the worshipper must first learn to revere God, and thereafter to love Him ; in other words, he must first of all try to create in himself an attraction for the Supreme Being. A man who has purified himself but who has no reverence or love

what-soever for God, will gain very little ; mere purity will not secure him the companionship of God.

The Vaishnava begins with the premise, that God, as the Soul of his soul, is nearer to him than any mortal may be ; that He loves man more than a mother loves her child, or a wife her husband ; and that when, in return, man has trained himself to feel a greater love for God than for his nearest and dearest object on earth, he then begins to be united to Him. According to this view, the love of God for man is an ever-constant quantity ; but, in order to realize it, man must first learn to love God ; and the amount of divine love that he will be able to realize, will be commensurate with the love that he will have trained himself to feel for Him.

But how is one to acquire this love for God ?

Before we proceed further we must say a word about what is called "sin," which exercises such a potent influence on the human heart. There are men who try to purify themselves by austerities and the subjugation of their passions ; they reduce themselves to skeletons by fasting ; they live in the wilderness, far removed from the scenes where trials and temptations beset their fellow-men, and thus to attain to perfection. But such practices are not encouraged by Vaishnavas, as they are unnatural, and, therefore, cannot possibly be pleasing to God. They contend that human passions are necessary for the harmonious development of man. It is, they think, undoubtedly His will that we should not only live in society, but enjoy all its legitimate pleasures, with this condition, however, that the sole object of our existence should be our salvation or the attainment of God.

There are others who shed tears of repentance for their sins, and by this means try to wash them away. But this practice, the Vaishnavā contends, can hardly be expected to accomplish fully the object they have in view. Artificial repentance is like washing charcoal with water. No amount of washing with water

will make a diamond of the charcoal, which, on the contrary, will retain the same black hue as it did before.

The self-infliction of pain by the penitent, as an atonement for sins, pre-supposes that God is something in the nature of a cruel master. But since God loves man with an infinite love, it cannot be that the self-infliction of pain by man, no matter for what purpose, can be pleasing to Him. We may, perhaps, please a tyrant by mortification, by the mutilation of our bodies, and by passing our days and nights in praising and glorifying him, forgetful of the comforts and even necessities of life. But God is not a tyrant. He is too great to derive any pleasure from the submission of a puny creature like man.

God only expects from man that he should develop his spiritual nature. This he can best accomplish by constant intercourse with holy beings. But the holiest of all Beings is God Himself. Seek His company therefore, and it will improve your nature and ultimately enable you to attain to moral perfection, so far as this is attainable by man on earth. And when, at length, you have come to feel even the least fraction of real love for Him, this ray will act upon your soul as a spark does upon a piece of charcoal, that is to say, will change its very nature. The spark converts the charcoal into glowing fire, and the particle of real love converts the man who feels it into a being immeasurably more beautiful than he was before.

The adoption of any other means than this for the sanctification of the soul is, in the Vaishnava's view, unnecessary, and he has but a mean opinion of those devices for ordering man's conduct,—hard and fast rules under which he is threatened with the wrath of God if he does evil, and bribed with the promise of future reward if he does well. This he considers insulting to God and derogatory to man, who has only to develop within himself an affection for the Supreme Being, and his sins will

disappear as mist before the sun's rays, and with them the desire and even the capacity to err in the future. *

The highest blessing of man is Krishna Prem or love for God. Sree Krishna in the Geeta says : " I serve as I am served, " or, in effect, " If men serve me as a Giver of bounties, I present myself to them as such. If I am loved, I love in return. If I am loved as a Master, I love the devotee as a master loves a devoted servant. If I am loved as a Friend, I love in return as a friend: If I am loved as a Lover, I Love as a husband loves his wife. "

The significance of the above passage in the Geeta may be illustrated thus : Suppose a King has two wives. To the one he says : " My dear, I am very wealthy. All my wealth is at your command. Rich robes, bright jewels, servants, carriages, in fact, whatever you may express a wish for, shall be given to you. " The Queen thanks the King, and says that if she were gratified in these respects she would desire nothing further. To the other he makes a similar offer, and she replies that she cares not for his wealth, but only for his love. The King gives each of his wives what she desires most. But few will doubt that the one who preferred the King to his wealth, made the wiser choice, for even from a business point of view, the possession of the King himself necessarily includes his wealth also.

Which is to be preferred, — the acquisition of the good-will of a King, that is to say, material prosperity, or himself personally,

* Of course austerities have their uses. As for instance, a man, who gives up society, has more time to devote to God and better opportunities of keeping himself pure than one in its midst. But austerity, as a means to the attainment of God, it is contended, is inferior to *prem* and *Bhakti*. Repentance is an effort of nature to free the soul of its impurities, but, as in the case of bodily ailments, nature alone is not always sufficient to purge out the poison that has entered the system and a drug is oftentimes necessary, that drug in the case of the soul being *bhakti*. What is called "the seed of sin," *Bhakti* alone can eradicate.

that is, as an object of love ? Most people, if not all, will prefer an object of love to property. To the great majority, life would be dreary without an object of love, and there are few that, if they had an object of love, would mind facing poverty and neglect. For such is the nature of man, that the very fact of his falling in love creates in him a state of ecstasy and heroical resignation.

It should never be forgotten that there is no real happiness in the enjoyment of wealth and power. The acquisition of wealth or power only begets a thirst for more. The wealthiest men in the world consider their wealth a burden rather than a source of happiness to them. The lot of the most powerful sovereign is far from being a happy one. He envies the peasant for the contentment and security he enjoys. Besides, the possession of wealth and authority tends to harden the heart, to make a man selfish, cruel, and, in other respects, quite unfit to associate with the holy and loving God. Hence the really good man, who desires to be the servant or companion of God, never seeks Him merely as a dispenser of worldly gifts.

The worshipper who asks God for wealth and power, indirectly requests the position of a master for himself, and that of subordinates for his fellow-men, thereby to provide him with slaves ; in other words, to enrich him at the expense of others. But one who understands the universal Fatherhood of God will never be guilty of such arrogance as this. How can a man who has realised the Fatherhood of God, ask Him to make him a master and His other children his slaves ? For, to ask God to give him wealth, is to ask Him to make others poor, so that he, by his wealth, can make the poorer men serve him as their master. In the same manner, for a man to ask for authority is to ask God to procure him slaves,—from among His children.

Thus, love is the supreme motive power in man. While its object is merely human, a man's love is not without its trouble, for human beings must necessarily have many defects. The

purser the object of love, the more durable and sweeter is the enjoyment. Thus, a man who has been able to transfer his love to Him, Who is absolutely without a flaw, and Whose love for men is disinterested, secures for himself the best object of love and, therefore, the highest blessing open to him.

Now, how is this love for God to be attained? First of all, God must become man in order to be loved; a man can love only a man. Dissimilars can never love one another. A man may feel an ardent desire in regard to some winged houri, but he must feel, at the same time, considerable anxiety about her safe keeping, lest she should fly away. For a man to love God, either God must become man, or the man must become God. But a man can never become God, so that if there is to be such a thing as love between God and man, it is necessary that God should come down to earth and appear in the shape of man, for the purpose of this union.

But God is unknowable and limitless as space. The Bible, however, says that He made man after His own image.* The Hindu Shastras say that the real figure of God is like that of man. Let us, however, assume that God is man *plus* something. But it is beyond the power of man to conceive of a rational and sentient being who is not a man † If you make Him something in the

* If it is sacriligious to make an Image of God, it is blasphemous on the part of the Bible to declare that God made man according to His own image. The "grossest" of idolators however knows that God is as vast as the universe. An Image of God is necessary only for that man who cannot worship Him in his heart. But to *realise* Him in the heart,—and there cannot be any worship without realization—is a task which is exceedingly difficult, and very few people can do it. An Image of God enables even an ordinary man to keep himself constantly in touch with God. The Vaishnava is required to spend most of his time in the company of God, and this he is enabled to do by keeping with him an Image of Sree Krishna whom he bathes, feeds and talks to.

† Any one can see for himself that it is impossible for a man to conceive of a rational being who is not a man. To make God, therefore, as

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nature of space or light, you only utter words which you cannot realize in your mind. You require something substantial,—a man, or you cannot love Him. If then God is man *plus* something, that additional something is beyond the comprehension of man, and, therefore, for practical purposes, of no concern to us.

Of course, if God is served as a Bounty-giver, it is of no moment what shape or form is given to Him. To a worshipper who asks for the forgiveness of his sins, or for the removal of some misery, or for wealth or favour, God Almighty may be a mere abstraction like light or space, but to those who would seek Him for His own sake, it is not so.

To sum up : Love exercises the greatest influence upon man. This love is only a source of happiness when the object is worthy. The fortunate man, therefore, who has been able to transfer his love to God, Who is in every way perfect, acquires the highest blessing which it is possible for man to enjoy. But to enable men to love Him, He must appear before them in the form of a human being.

The Vaishnavas invest God mainly with two attributes, namely, power and loveliness. He is Almighty and He is All-sweet. As an object of love we have nothing to do with His might. On the other hand, the idea of His might chills the love of the worshipper.* Let them, therefore, who serve for selfish purposes,

vast as space is to put Him beyond our reach. Astronomy says that our sun has a sun of its own. This latter must be much bigger than the one which gives us light. But our direct concern is with our own sun, and not the sun of the sun we see.

* God is both kind and seemingly terrible. There are Hindu devotees who worship the terrible aspect of the Deity. They make His Image most fearful to look at, and He is worshipped with blood. But love of God is the highest object of the Vaishnavas. To love any Being who is terrible, is impossible, so they do not admit that there is anything to be afraid of in God. According to them his thunderbolts are witnesses of His mercy. They therefore make His Image beautiful, give Him a flute, worship Him in moon-lit nights and with the choicest flowers...

contemplate Him as all-powerful and worship Him as such. They can make Him boundless as space, and call Him infinite, almighty and unapproachable. But the worshipper who wants to love Him, has only to do with the human aspect of God. We said that God is man *plus* something : this something represents His power. It is this something which makes Him Almighty. The worshipper, who is desirous of making God an object of love, rejects the superhuman portion of His nature, and worships Him only as the All-sweet man. And thus Sree Krishna is a beautiful youth to women, and a child to his parents, with only a flute in his hand, who makes every man and woman a slave by his irresistible attractions.

We have already seen that Sree Krishna, in the Geeta, says : " I serve as I am served ;" that is to say, if He is regarded as a bounty-giver, He appears as such to the worshipper ; if He is loved, He returns the love of the worshipper. The chief object of the existence of man is to secure His love by loving Him. Sree Krishna again says : " I appear to the worshipper in the same form as that in which I am worshipped by him.. " Thus, to a man who gives God the form of Jesus Christ, He appears in that form ; similarly, a man who worships God as Sree Krishna, discovers Him as such. To those who worship God as a formless Being, He is without any form. To those who regard Him as light, He is only light, and so forth.

Let us assume for the present that the Krishna Leela is a myth and the whole story a fiction of the sages, invented for the purpose of a rational, easy and delightful system of worship. Be it so. But if love for God is the highest blessing possible to man, we cannot love Him unless He assumes the form of a man. Secondly, we cannot love Him unless He gives us some occasion for our love. Man can feel an attraction for another on account of his or her personal appearance. He can also entertain a similar feeling for his or her works. Thus, a man may admire a woman simply

for her beauty. Every one admired Washington, even those who had never seen him, because his works charmed his fellow-creatures. God, therefore, to be loved, must appear before man as a lovely Being, or He must present man with some of his lovely works.

A man with a comely appearance and eminent qualities naturally secures the love of his fellows by his character. God was an abstraction before. He took the attractive form of Sree Krishna and appeared in Brindaban. There He won the hearts of all by his lovely qualities. By this condescension the Lord God gave men an opportunity of acquiring a love for Him. *

That great work, the Sreemat Bhagabat, when discussing the ethics of the Rash Leela, observes that God Almighty is above human passions and sentiments, and that if He, when He assumed the form of man, had remained so, men could never have loved or associated with Him. He, therefore, took a human form and assumed human feelings solely for the good of His creatures on earth. For, this condescension on His part enabled people on earth to love Him and to be able to associate with Him. If Jesus had not appeared as a Messiah, the Christians could never have entertained that tender feeling for God as they do now.

The distinctive feature of Vaishnavism is that it teaches man how to attain to God by what may be called worshipping Him domestically. Man is a domestic being and he forms different relationships. Human beings are related to one another as father and son, brother and brother, wife and husband, and as friend and friend. Thus originate paternal and filial love, fraternal love, con-

* The hero of a fiction wins the heart of its readers. Sree Krishna or God Almighty is the Hero in the Krishna Leela. Assuming for the sake of argument that Krishna Leela is a fiction, it yet creates an attraction for Sree Krishna, that is to say, God Almighty.

jugal love and friendship. Man has this four-fold attraction in his domestic life, and God has made him a sociable being, with a view to give him an opportunity of cultivating these four kinds of love. What man has to do is to direct one, or more than one, or all of these kinds of love to God ; that is to say, he is to love God, as a father, a son, a friend or a husband ; or, he may feel some sort of mixed love without being able to distinguish what it is. So that to love God, what the worshipper has to do is to regard Him as one of his nearest relations.

One who can do this is a fortunate man. But it is difficult for a man to give God such a tender place in his heart. The inhabitants of Braja were, however, able to accomplish this. God there was as a master * to the people, a son to Nanda and Jasoda, a friend to the cow-boys, and a lover to the Gopees. Lord Sree Krishna came down upon earth with His heavenly attendants to teach mankind how He should be loved. Follow in the wake of the men and women of Braja for the purpose of cultivating your love for Sree Krishna, and you will thereby win the supreme object of life.

It is the easiest thing in the world for a man to call God, "my beloved son" or "my dear lover"; but it is very difficult, if not impossible, for him to realize it. If one therefore addresses God in endearing terms, such as, "Come, my dear boy, let me dress your hair," he either utters a blasphemy, or a jargon of meaningless words. But a devotee can make Jasoda say so. In the same manner, it is blasphemy for a man to address God, thus : "Let me kiss Thy cheek," but he can make Radha speak in such language. God is so great and so perfect in His holiness that sincere men have always tried to avoid addressing Him direct. The Christians can not venture to approach Him unless introduced by Christ. The

* The Vaishnavas declare that the love of a son for his father is similar to that of a dutiful servant for his master.

Catholics invoke Mary to gain the favour of Jesus. * So Jasoda is requisitioned by the Vaishnavas to call him a son.

According to a certain sect of Hindus, the lower classes of the people have not the privilege of worshipping God direct ; they must worship Him through the Brahmin or the priest. They, therefore, procure the offerings necessary for the purpose of worship, and place them before the Brahmin. The Brahmin offers them to God in the name of the devotee, who watches the proceedings from a distance, being considered too impure to approach the Image or the shrine where the offering is made. Now, assuming such offerings are acceptable to God, there cannot be any manner of doubt, that the devotee gains by the worship, through whom he makes the offering.

In the same manner, though the devotee makes Jasoda fondle the baby Krishna, and Radha embrace Him as her lover, it is the devotee, who, by the law of sympathy, obtains the advantage. The advantage is that the devotee, by constant training, and by constantly meditating upon the Leela of Krishna, gradually acquires an attraction for Him. Indeed, a devotee who follows in the wake of Jasoda may eventually attain some thing like the love which she entertained for her son, and a devotee who follows in the wake of Radha, may similarly feel something like what she felt for her lover. Assuming that the Krishna Leela is a work of the imagination, constant practice in devotion gives shape to Sree Krishna, Radha and Brindaban, etc. in his mind, and the devotee at length realizes the ecstasy of a direct communion with God Almighty.

A religion is to be judged by its fruits. Men inspired with

* A Christian gentleman while going through the above sentences was pleased to remark : "This, of course, is not correct. "Our Father who art in heaven, etc., being included in the daily prayers of all Christians." We presume, the Christians hold that a prayer is more acceptable to God when conveyed through the medium of Christ than when conveyed direct to Him.

the least particle of love for Sree Krishna are to be found here and there, though, of course, their number must always be small, who are so pure, so happy, so elevated and consequently so attractive, that their very presence is like the light of the full moon on a cloudless night. The love for God, which a devotee acquires by the contemplation of the Krishna and Gauranga Leelas, is sufficient to fill the on-looker with wonder and awe. The very appearance of such a man has oftentimes the effect of softening the heart of hardened sinners, and leading them to amend their lives.

We have hitherto assumed that Sree Krishna, and, therefore, His Leelas are myths. But the Leela of Sree Gauranga is a reality, and is in itself enough for the purpose of acquiring love for God. As a matter of fact, however, Sree Krishna is not a myth. He is a historical character, as much as Jesus is. His sayings and doings are susceptible of as much proof, as those of Jesus are. But yet we cannot consider that the proofs upon which Christianity is based and the proofs upon which the Leela of Sree Krishna is founded, are conclusive. This defect of Vaishnavism, however, was satisfactorily removed by the advent of Sree Gauranga. He came to bear witness to Sree Krishna and His Leela. Indeed, all the Leelas performed by Sree Krishna were repeated by Sree Gauranga to explain their significance to mankind. If it is accepted that Sree Gauranga is God Almighty Himself, or even if it is conceded that he is a messenger from God, then Sree Krishna and His Leela must be accepted as realities. A review of the Vaishnava philosophy and a further analysis of the Krishna Leela will be attempted as we proceed with the life, and we shall also notice certain other points which we are obliged to pass over for the present.

We said in the Preface that all religious faiths, founded upon the avatar philosophy, agree in essentials. Thus, for instance, the Christians, Mussulmans and Hindus believe in an Almighty

and All-good Creator ; in the utility of worship and prayer ; in a moral and virtuous life ; and in a future state. They also agree that God Almighty sends Messiahs to this earth for the good of humanity. They further admit that Jesus Christ is such a Messiah. So it can be seen that they are in perfect accord in regard to the essentials of their religions. But the Christian, having gone so far with the Hindu and the Mussulman, parts company with them. He says that Jesus Christ is the only Messiah from God—the first and the last. The Mussulman, however, keeps by his Hindu brother and goes a step further with him, for he says, along with the Hindu, that there must be other Messiahs than Jesus Christ, as for instance, Mahomed. Here, however, the Mussulman parts company with the Hindu, for though he admits Jesus Christ as the first Messiah, and Mahomed as the second, yet he will not admit the advent of a third. The Hindu declares that God sends Messiahs to this world at different periods and at different ages.

The last Leelas of Sree Krishna were performed in Dwarka, where his father Vasudeva was king. Now, if Brindaban was the abode of Love, and Mathura the abode of Knowledge, Dwarka was the abode of Work. There are three ways by which men may secure for themselves a better future after death. The first is by winning over God by *prem* and *bhakti*, and those who follow this method belong to Brindaban. The second is by purifying the soul by *yog*, austerities, penance, formal worship, and so forth, and those who adopt these methods belong to Mathura. The third way is by performing good works such as tending the sick, feeding the hungry, etc., and those worshippers who rely for their salvation upon these practices, belong to Dwarka.

During the Rash Leela the Lord Sree Krishna said : "Those who serve Me for reward do not serve Me but themselves." Thus the people of Dwarka, though they may attain to virtue and get their reward in after-life, have yet nothing to do with

God. Says Sree Krishna, "I serve as I am served" *i. e.* if a man performs a good work for reward he gets his reward from God, and loses further claims upon him. In the same manner, the man who passes his life in the wilderness, engaged in yog, and the performance of different kinds of austerities, doubtless serves thereby to purify his soul and develop its inherent powers, but having never sought God he can never attain to His lotus feet.

"I serve, as I am served," says Sree Krishna. "Seek me and I shall seek you," "If you feel an attraction for Me I shall feel an attraction for you." The only way by which to attain to His lotus feet, is, therefore, *prem* and *bhukti*, says the Vaishnava. A Sadhu who has made himself absolutely pure but has no *bhakti*, is like a beautiful maiden who has no heart. As she can not expect to win a loving husband, so the Sadhu who is without *bhukti* cannot reasonably expect a loving God to cherish him.

The philosophies in which India is so rich have, no doubt, their uses as the sciences have ; but if religion means the art of acquiring God, a philosophy, which is not based upon *bhakti*, can never be said to be religious.

Of course, what a worshipper generally does is to combine all the methods for the purposes of salvation. A true *bhakta* is one who has realized the Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man, and he naturally feels an abhorrence for evil deeds and an impure life, as he feels a natural inclination for good works. To a real *bhakta*, therefore, the other methods are not necessary, though an absolutely sincere *bhakta* is a very great rarity.

CHAPTER I.

THE FULL MOON.

ON the night of the full moon, in the most delightful month of the twelve, Falgoon (February and March), in the year 1407 of the Shaka era (1486 A. D.), the Lord Gauranga was born, in Navadweep (Nadia),—a city situated on both sides of the sacred Bhagirathi, the river on which Calcutta now stands, and famous for its eminent men of learning. The sun set in the west, and the full moon rose in all her glory. Just then an eclipse of the moon took place, and the occasion being considered holy, the citizens began, as usual under such circumstances, to proclaim the event by loud shouts of *Haribol*, which means, ‘cry Hari,’ Hari being a name of God dear to Vaishnavas.

Astrologers say that the moment was also eminently auspicious according to the calculation made by them.*

Nadia, situated on the holy Bhagirathi, was then perhaps the first city in the world both spiritually and intellectually. Falgoon is the most delightful month in the year, the fairest night in all the year is that on which the full moon rises in that month, and the most sacred moment possible is when an eclipse takes place, as then, more than at any other time, the entire people vie with one another in chanting the name of God. The devotees

* The astrologers, proud of the truth of their science, are accustomed to refer to the birth of Sree Krishna and Sree Gauranga, who were both born into this world at moments pre-eminently auspicious according to the reckonings of their system.

of Gauranga, referring to the above combination of favourable circumstances, which attended his birth, declare with natural satisfaction, that it was only, what might be expected, as befitting His unapproachably exalted position.

His devotees further declare, that those who were, in their joy, shouting Haribol, fancied that they were doing so to proclaim the eclipse. But though they did not know the secret, they were really doing so to proclaim the advent of Him whose name they were uttering. Why was it that Sree Gauranga was born just when the learned city of Nadia had attained the zenith of its intellectual eminence? Why was it, that his advent took place at a time when the great Vasudeva Sarbabhauma (whom he subsequently converted) flourished? His devotees answer the above questions thus. They say: He came at this period of supreme literary activity to show that the end of all knowledge is the attainment of God. He came at the time of Sarbabhauma to show that he was not afraid of submitting his credentials to a thorough examination, even by men of the highest intellect and culture.

There was a large Nimba tree near the house of Sree Jagannath Misra. Under it, in a hut prepared for the purpose, Gauranga was born. The attending midwife perceived no sign of life in the new-born babe. Various means were adopted to revive him, but for a considerable time without success.* He, however, at last began to breathe, and there was joy in the heart of the father and the mother, and those who attended on the latter. The child was of an unusually large size

* The account of his early *Leela* is to be found in many books and songs written and composed either by his personal attendants and immediate followers, or at their bidding, by others. We can mention here the names of some of the most important books, viz, Ananta Sahita, Notes of Muraree, Mukunda Pandit's Gauranga Udai, Chaitanya Charita, Chaitanya Bhagabat, Chaitanya Charitamrita, Chaitanya Chandrodaya, Chaitanya Mangal, Advaita Prokas, etc.

On account of his being born in the thirteenth month, having been full twelve months in the womb.

His skin was fair as molten gold. His father gave him the name of Biswambhar, but his mother called him Nimai. The name, Gauranga, was given him on the occasion of his assuming the sacred thread. His worshippers called him Sree Gauranga, or the "yellow-white bodied," as well as Gaur. His last name was Sree Krishna Chaitanya, that is, he who awakens God (Sree Krishna) in the hearts of men.

The form and disposition of Nimai were very much unlike those of other children. In stature he was very tall for his age. He was perfectly healthy, and so strong and restless that women could hardly keep him in their arms. One peculiarity of the boy, which seemed more striking than the rest, was that the mere uttering of the name of Hari could pacify him when he cried. His parents had lost eight daughters successively, and then there was born to them a son called Biswarup. When this boy was about ten years, Nimai was born. Being the youngest he was naturally the pet of the family and of their relations, a fact which it seems the boy soon came to know, for he was wont to betray, on all occasions, the stubbornness and waywardness of the spoilt child. When he cried, it was difficult to soothe him, and the cry oftentimes ended in a swoon, which gave his parents much trouble and anxiety until they came to know the secret as to how the boy could be soothed on such occasions. They repeated the name of Hari, and this acted like a charm upon the stubborn and wayward child.

When he had learnt to crawl on his hands and knees, it became necessary to keep a constant watch on him, for he would otherwise steal away into the street or to the bank of the Ganges, *i. e.*, the Bhagirathi. If he saw any one following him, he scampered off on all fours as fast as he could, to avoid being caught. The sight was, indeed, pleasant to see him moving

about on his knees and hands, and Shachee would often set him down in the yard, and, with her companions, stand motionless to enjoy the spectacle.

As soon as he had learned to walk, Jagannath, Shachee, and Biswarup, together with their relations and neighbours, were in a state of constant anxiety on his account, fearing that he should steal away and be lost in the crowded streets. One day he actually seized a serpent (cobra), after which he was guarded with still greater care. Nevertheless, on another day, a great danger befell him. A thief named Mekh Mallee, finding the child alone, with gold ornaments on his person, carried him away with the intention of robbing and murdering him. Search was made for the child, but he was nowhere to be found. Eventually, when they were about to give up the search as being hopeless, he returned suddenly, and ran into the arms of his father. On being asked where he had been, he replied that some one had taken him away, and then brought him back. The carrying away of the child formed a turning point in the life of the fortunate thief. As soon as he had placed the boy on his shoulders, an uncontrollable influence came over him. The idea of killing such a lovely being sent a shudder through his frame. He gradually came to perceive clearly how wicked and heartless a wretch he had been all the days of his life. His first impulse was to leave the child at his father's house. Having done this, he resolved to atone for his previous sins by a life of rigid penance and austerity. His earthly desires all forsook him, and he relinquished the world to lead the life of a religious recluse. He was afterwards regarded with great veneration as a saint.

The boy, it is true, was human in form, but he was not, as has been said before, quite like other children. A complexion resembling molten gold, is a poet's creation, but in the case of little Nimai, it proved to be a reality. The palms of his hands

and the soles of his feet were, as it were, painted with fresh vermilion. When he ran about, it seemed as if blood was oozing out of the soles of his feet. His features were beautifully formed. The contour of his body was simply perfect. The movement of every limb, the glance of his eyes, his smile and his speech were all equally graceful. His fascinating face, free from the slightest defect, was, as it were, the masterwork of a sculptor of the highest genius. His lips were ruddy, like the ripe *Bimba* fruit ; but his eyes were perhaps more lovely than any other part of his body. No one, who had not seen the boy, could believe that a human being could have eyes so divinely beautiful. His eyes, elongated like the petals of a lotus, slightly tinged with red, seemed as if "moist with lotus honey." Everyone who looked at the child, felt an attraction towards him, and instinctively asked himself : " Is he a human child, or a child of the Gods, fallen from heaven ?"

There was another charm possessed by the child, which made any one that caressed him, feel a thrill of joy pass through his frame. On this account any one who happened to take him in his or her arms, was unwilling to set him down again. Shachee, therefore, was allowed but limited opportunities of enjoying the pleasure of keeping the boy in her arms.

Besides, from the time of the child's birth, Jagannath, Shachee, and other near relatives began to witness many supernatural incidents. While the boy slept, something like a moon was, now and then, seen shining on his breast. Sometimes he was seen enveloped with a light which looked like lightning or electricity. Sometimes Shachee would see the room filled with luminous figures, and in her alarm call her husband. She would sometimes think that they were thieves or evil spirits. In order that the latter might do no harm to the child, she would tie a knot on his head with a thread as a charm, or, blowing with the mouth on his body, pronounce *mantras*, invoking divine protection for every part thereof.

One night, as the boy slept in her room, Shachee beheld luminous figures surrounding and apparently caressing him. Accustomed to such sights, she was not as alarmed as before, but rousing the child she told him to go to his father who was lying in another room and sleep there, hoping that no mishap would occur to him if he were with his father. She called out to her husband to take the boy to his room. But as the boy proceeded to his father's, she heard the sound of musical anklets such as are worn by children, but which Nimai was not wearing. She eagerly ran to see whence the exquisite sound proceeded, and found that Jagannath was coming out to take the child to his own apartment. He too had heard the sound. Thus both Shachee and Jagannath heard the music proceeding from the bare feet of Nimai. Shachee followed Nimai, and the father and mother then lulled him to sleep. They began to talk about him. Jagannath said that these sounds of musical anklets indicated that Gopal* (God in the form of a child) was present in the person of the boy. But Shachee, actuated by motherly affection, did not think herself at all honoured by the suggestion, and replied, "Whatsoever it may be, may no evil betide my little Nimai!"

Whatever might happen in his sleeping room, the boy Nimai was quite like other boys when engaged in play. He used to play all day long. He would not learn the alphabet though requested to do so by his parents. He would do nothing but play. Shachee was pained, and her motherly vanity was hurt. She would neatly dress her beautiful child, but the restless boy would proceed immediately to play and besmear his whole body with dust. Again would his mother wash him and adorn his person, and again, in an instant, he would do as before.

* Gopal is the boy Sree Krishna, Who is always represented as wearing musical anklets.

Nimai is not in the house. After much search Shachee discovers him, his face pale from hunger and thirst, and covered with drops of sweat from exposure to the sun. She says to her son, "My foolish child, you must be famished with hunger, and your face is discoloured from the heat of the sun. When will you learn to take care of yourself?" But Nimai does not give up his play. Either Shachee gets hold of the boy and drags him home or else the boy runs away. In the latter case, she pursues the child, but it is not in her power to catch swift-footed Nimai. Desisting from the pursuit, she gives way to tears. Thereupon Nimai runs back to her and throws his arms round her neck. He could not bear to see tears in the eyes of his mother.

In the evening, before Nimai went to sleep, Shachee enjoyed a few moments of supreme happiness, for then the mother had sole possession of her child.

There was extraordinary skill in the way Nimai danced. Men and women of the neighbourhood offered him sweetmeats and fruits simply to induce him to dance for them. When he danced, it seemed as if some invisible influence impelled him and that he had no control over his movements, in which there was a grace not earthly but divine. The sight had an extraordinary effect upon the beholders. It imparted a thrill of joy, so intense as to bring tears into their eyes; and it filled their hearts with religious feelings of the purest kind, such as reverence and love for God, together with a sense of the nothingness of worldly things.

Those who saw him dance felt an inclination to join with him, but were dissuaded from it by a sense of shame, for dancing was not permitted in genteel society. There was, as has been stated, something divine in the dance of Nimai. A boy but four years old, perfectly healthy and exquisitely beautiful, with faultless limbs, a countenance bright as the moon, a well-formed chest, a slender waist, tightly wrapped round with a piece

of cloth, his cheeks and forehead elegantly painted with white *alaka*, his hair carefully combed and tied into a knot and adorned with golden flowers, Nimai was accustomed to dance in the yard of Jagannath Misra's house, while Shachee and her female friends enjoyed the spectacle, keeping time with their hands. Presently tears of joy would appear in their eyes. They were enraptured with the sight, and at length losing all consciousness of the material world, beheld nothing but a graceful figure of gold dancing before them. Their hearts moved with the graceful motion of Nimai, and they felt that there was nothing but joy in the world, and that the whole universe was dancing with the golden child. They then unconsciously found themselves overpowered by a feeling of reverence for God. They came to feel that it was joy everywhere, that God himself was joy ; and the dancing Nimai was a witness to that fact.

In the midst of his playmates he would dance sometimes of his own accord. When Nimai danced, elderly people, men and women, felt, as we said before, an impulse to dance with him, but resisted the influence. Children, however, did not, for they could not, resist. They felt the impulse, and allowed themselves to be led by it. They danced with Nimai, with uplifted hands, as Nimai did, exclaiming, "Hari Hari!" They themselves and those who witnessed the scene, were overpowered by devotional feelings. Sometimes Nimai would roll on the ground in the ecstasy of his feelings, and some of his playmates would follow his example, as if inspired by an uncontrollable influence. Those who had succeeded in resisting the impulse to join in the dance fell and rolled upon the ground, if Nimai embraced or even touched them! Whenever Shachee heard shouts of Haribol, she knew that Nimai was engaged in his wild play, and running to him, would take him up in her arms, rub off the dust from his body, and bring him home.

One day he was seen to dance with unusual excitement. He was then four years old. Nimai and other boys at his bidding, adorned themselves with garlands of wild flowers. They danced keeping time with their hands and shouting "Haribol." They began without method, but soon a definite system marked their dance. Nimai stood in the middle, and his companions danced round him holding each other's hands.* A learned and grave old man, who chanced to be passing at the time, stopped to witness the fun, but, strange to say, losing his self-control, immediately began to dance, precisely in the same manner, with uplifted arms, and exclaiming "Haribol." Shachee hearing shouts of "Haribol" immediately came to the spot and took her child away. On her lifting up the child, the spell was broken, and the learned old man fled abashed, not knowing how to account for the temporary aberration that had seized him!

Shachee, blinded by motherly affection, believed that her son was naturally a quiet boy, and that it was his turbulent playmates who made him wild. One night she failed to lull her child to sleep. He stood on his mother's breast, and taking hold of her hands began to swing his body like a pendulum. Shachee asked: "Are you not a mad boy to behave in the way you do." "No, mother," replied Nimai, "every one is mad save myself." Shachee was struck with the answer, as coming from a boy of four. She called to her husband and addressed him thus: "Hear what the mad boy Nimai says, that every one is mad except himself!"

Nimai was not yet five years old. At that age almost every child in Nadia was at school, except Nimai, and this the father did not relish. One day Jagannath, with a stick in his hand, rushed in an angry mood to the riverside, where the boy

* Of course this reminds us of the *Rash* or ecstatic dance of Sree Krishna, a short description of which has been given before.

was engaged in play. Shachee ran after him to protect Nimai. At the sight of his angry father, with a stick in his hand, the child concealed himself behind his mother. Frowning at the child, Jagannath said to Shachee: "Let him go, you are spoiling the boy." Shachee snatched away the stick from the not-unwilling hand of her husband. Nimai kept on crying: Jagannath's heart was touched. He opened his arms to him, and taking the boy, pressed him to his bosom, kissed his face over and over again, and said: "I must be a very cruel man to make Nimai cry thus." Thus indulged, as a matter of course, Nimai continued to neglect his studies.

Nimai cherished some fear for his father and elder brother, but none for his mother, whom he seemed to treat more as a child than as the venerable lady she was. Though only five years old, he now and then gave evidence of possessing the wisdom of a sage. On such occasions Shachee would be seized with the suspicion that Nimai was somebody else and not really her child; that his childish demeanour was all assumed to deceive her, and that his tricks on her were played, with a purpose. But this suspicion never lasted for a very great length of time.

His mother was, like all Hindu ladies of high caste, a keen observer of outward purity. But to tease her, he would touch a thing or person which or whom it was an abomination to touch. Shachee would at this be sorely annoyed. Sometimes she would scold him, but Nimai was not to be persuaded out of his unruly ways. Used earthen cooking-pots are considered impure and should not be touched. Nimai having made a pile of them stood upon it. Shachee, who was greatly scandalized, reproved him, saying, "Are you not ashamed of yourself,—you that being a Brahmin's son have allowed yourself to come in contact with such foul things?" Nimai gravely answered: "The idea of external purity is a delusion."

Shachee was surprised to hear such a remark from a boy of five. At that moment Nimai did not seem to her to be a boy of five, but a sage advanced in years. She felt for the moment that she was only a witless woman, and her son her wise preceptor. But soon the boyish conduct of Nimai made her forget her mistake.

Shachee very often gazed at her child with a tender look as if to devour his beauty, and whenever Nimai perceived this he wantonly and deliberately turned his face away from her. As Nimai continued the practice, simple-minded Shachee at last came to understand that her son, knowing her intentions, was playing tricks with her. She, of course, felt hurt. The voice of Nimai was sweeter than music ; and Shachee, whenever she found an opportunity, tried to make him speak. Simply for this purpose she would tease him with questions. Nimai, knowing his mother's object, would close his lips and would refuse to utter a word. "Now, what is the matter, Nimai?" asks Shachee. "Why don't you speak?" But Nimai replies by a provoking smile. Shachee returns to the charge. "Nimai," says she, "you don't speak to me now ; I am sure you will not maintain me when I am old." Nevertheless Nimai does not speak. Shachee continues, "Nimai, when I am dead, you shall be an orphan and walk in the streets hungry and uncared for." Thus they contended incessantly, mother and son.

Sometimes when Nimai sorely taxed her patience Shachee would pursue him with a rod in her hand. The naughty child, thus pursued, would run into the midst of cast-away earthen cooking-pots, where, of course, Shachee could not follow him. The fact was, the great importance that Shachee attached to external purity, did not meet with the approval of Nimai, child though he was. And mother and son lived in a state of constant discord in regard to this matter. A Chamar is a man of low caste, whose touch is considered an abomination ; but Nimai would touch such people in spite of the loud protestations of

his mother. After thus polluting himself, Nimai would pursue his mother. One who has touched a Chamar and not bathed, remains unclean, and is not permitted to touch one of a clean caste. Shachee would, under such circumstances, fly before the pursuit of Nimai, and entering the house, close the door against him. One day he actually brought a puppy home. A dog is an unclean animal according to Hindu notions, and Shachee was scandalized.

Another cause of discord between mother and son was that the former wanted her child to deport himself as quietly and decently as the child of a learned Brahmin and *savant* was expected to do. But Nimai was unruly, and loved all sorts of sports. His energy was untiring, and he did many things that shocked his mother's notions of propriety. She gradually came to believe that either her son was a little wrong in the head or was possessed by some evil spirit. One consolation she had, namely, that her child loved her intensely and devotedly.

While yet not more than five years old, he one day began to cry, and his father and mother tried to quiet him. They uttered the name of Hari, which, though usually acted upon him like a charm, produced no effect on this occasion. The parents were alarmed, for they feared the child would soon fall into a swoon. The mother, in an agonising tone, asked the child : "Why do you break our hearts thus ? Tell us what is it that you want ?" Nimai, in the midst of his sobs, gave this reply : "I want all the offerings which Jagadish and Hiranya have prepared for presentation to God."

Now, Jagadish and Hiranya were two neighbours of Jaganath, who had, on the eleventh day of the moon, as was the custom, prepared some offerings for Sree Krishna, and Nimai now wanted them all !

The request of Nimai surprised them. How could a child of five know that it was the eleventh day of the moon, and that

on that particular day some Brahmins made offerings to God ? And how could he know that the two Brahmins had prepared the offerings ? For, all Brahmins did not observe the ceremony. Now, it would have been a sacrilege to give to a child offerings intended for Sree Krishna. Shachee and Jagannath, therefore, did not know how to get out of the difficulty. They suggested that they should fetch for him better articles than the offerings for which he was crying. But Nimai would have those things, or nothing at all.

The affair came to the notice of the two Brahmins, who hastened to see what the real matter was. They saw that the child, with his exquisite beauty, had become still more beautiful under the excitement of his feelings. They felt that it was impossible for a boy so young to play of his own accord the part he was doing ; and the idea took possession of their minds that the infant Krishna, (who is named Bal-Gopal), must have been struck with the beauty of the child and made his body his tenement. It was no doubt Bal-Gopal who was demanding the offerings, thought they. They had prepared the offerings for him (Sree Krishna), and it was He who was now claiming them through the child ! The notion thrilled them with emotion. They returned, and placing the offerings before Nimai, said : "Take them, beautiful Nimai ! and let Gopal partake of them through you." Let it be noted here, that those two Brahmins subsequently became two of the most ardent followers of Nimai.

Of the offerings, Nimai ate a portion, threw away some, and distributed the rest. Shachee watched the career of the child with anxiety. The idea was gathering strength in her mind, that Nimai was either partially insane, or was under the influence of a spirit. But she did not like to express her suspicions to outsiders. She therefore sent for her sister to consult with her. When that lady came, Shachee thus unburdened her heart to the former. She said : "Sister, I do not understand why

a child so good in every way, and so fair of aspect, should act so whimsically at times. Advise me what to do." The sister failed to give any advice, but suggested that she (Shachee) should take the opinions of some of the wise matrons of the neighbourhood.

This suggestion Shachee was obliged to adopt, though much against her will. The matrons came at Shachee's invitation and assembled in her house. Now, these matrons had *savants* for their husbands, and they themselves had passed their days in the midst of intellectual conversations. That being the case, they fancied that they were competent enough to settle the matter, and so, without any misgivings, sat in judgment on the naughty acts of Nimai.

Shachee related the tale of her sorrow, with an abundance of tears. She said that her boy was very affectionate, and that he appeared to be very intelligent also. "Nor do I blame him," she added, "for smashing the domestic utensils now and then, for every child does it. But alas! he has no reverence for the gods, and is sacrilegious enough to partake of offerings intended for them. He has, besides, no idea that cooked food is impure. Indeed, ridiculous as it may appear, the child would seem to have an opinion of his own on this point. He has an utter contempt for the notion that it pollutes a man to touch impure men or things. If I scold him for the outrages he commits, he stops me by declaring that he is the Lord, and that anything impure becomes holy by his touch!" Every one present perceived that it pained the good lady very much to prefer, to out-siders, such serious charges against her beloved child.

The elderly ladies at once voted that the question before them was a serious one. They inquired how and when this change had come over the boy. Shachee answered, "I must tell you all. On a certain night some luminous figures were bending over Nimai while he slept as if caressing him. The change was apparently brought about by their influence." The matrons, after

some consultation, unanimously came to the conclusion that it was all the work of evil spirits. As chance would have it, Nimai just then appeared on the scene, and the matron who was presiding over this assembly of ladies accosted him. "Nimai," said she, "you are the son of a Brahmin and a learned man : how is it that you have no respect either for the gods or for the Brahmins ?" Thereupon Nimai, with a mocking smile, replied, "I revere none, every one should revere me !"

Shachee was shocked, especially as the blasphemy was committed before so many witnesses. She exclaimed, "Listen to what he says ;" and feeling that Nimai must have highly offended the gods, she tried to appease them by appealing to their mercy, saying, "All the gods are like jewels on my head. I revere them all." Then casting her eyes upward and joining her hands, she addressed all the gods in the universe in these words : "O, ye dwellers in Heaven ! take no offence at the words of my wild boy. He knows not what he says." She then burst into tears. The fact is, Shachee would not have been so alarmed, had she been able to satisfy her conscience that her boy was not responsible for his actions. But she suspected in her heart of hearts that her boy, though so young, had full knowledge of what he was doing !

After prolonged deliberation, the wise matrons, having come to the decision that all this was the work of evil spirits, recommended that a ceremony should be duly performed for the reformation and future welfare of the child, and that the goddess Shasti (protectress of children) should be induced by offerings to pay special regard to his protection.

Shachee approved of the advice. But what if Nimai should commit the further sacrilege of partaking of the offerings prepared for the goddess ? And if Nimai saw the offerings and ate any portion thereof, would not Shasti, instead of doing him any good, do him all the mischief she was capable of ? She, therefore,

undertook to prepare the offerings with the utmost secrecy. This she succeeded in doing, and then, with the offerings concealed in the folds of her *saree*, proceeded by a private path towards the place of worship. When she had gone a long way from home, she began to think she had succeeded in eluding Nimai. But lo ! no sooner had the thought crossed her mind than she found her child before her. Whether it was her confusion that betrayed her, or that Nimai, being all-knowing, knew all, he confidently confronted his mother and asked her to declare what she was carrying concealed in the folds of her *saree*. Shachee found herself in an inextricable difficulty. She could only stammer out, "My dear child, go home." "But what are you carrying with you ?" re-iterated Nimai. "Sweet-meats, no doubt. I am very very hungry, mother ; give some to me." Shachee, in the anguish of her heart, exclaimed :

"My boy, you ought not to say so, for the sweetmeats are meant for the goddess Shasti. When I have offered them to her, I promise I shall give you sweetmeats and fruits in plenty." "But I am hungry, mother. I can't wait so long," replied Nimai, "and I must have them this moment." So saying, he snatched away a portion of the offerings and ran off !

A thunderbolt, as it were, fell upon Shachee's head, and she cried out in sorrow and anger : "Are you not a Brahmin's son ? I shall throw myself into the Ganges, and thus put an end to my life." "Console yourself, mother," said Nimai, "I assure you, Shasti will be highly pleased if I eat them." Shachee said : "Your conduct, little rogue that you are, will bring ruin upon you." Then weeping, in the bitterness of her heart, she repaired to the goddess Shasti, knelt before her and prayed to her that her son, wicked as he was, might yet be forgiven his sacrilegious audacity.

Whether the sacrilegious conduct of Nimai really offended Shasti or not, cannot be determined, but it is certain that the

offerings for the goddess did the boy no evident good. Neither the grace of Shasti, nor the ceremonies performed by Shachee changed his wayward disposition in the least. Murari Gupta, an inhabitant of Shreehatta (Sylhet), was at this time residing in Nava-dweep. He was a student in the Grammar tole of Gangadaś, though he also practised as a physician. He had already obtained a footing in that great city, at the early age of twenty. He was a kindly-disposed, quiet youth of great worth and physical strength. He had studied the Sanskrit work Yogavasista, and imbibed the doctrines inculcated therein.*

One day Murari, while proceeding on his way, was discussing with some friends the philosophy of Yogavasista. He was speaking with some warmth, and gave emphasis to his ideas by shaking his head and waving his hand. Just at this moment, he heard a peal of laughter behind him. He looked back and saw that he was being followed by Nimai and his companions, the former of whom was imitating the student's voice and gestures, while his companions were being thrown into fits of laughter by his audacious mimicry. Murari doubtless resented the impertinent conduct of Nimai ; but, being of a serious turn of mind, he said nothing, and immediately resumed the discussion. But as soon as he did so, Nimai returned to his mimicry, and the result was the renewed merriment of the other boys ! Murari losing his patience, turned to his ridiculer and remarked : "How rude and unmannerly of Jagannath's son ! What a perverted child !" Nimai being offended by these observations, said, addressing Murari, "I will teach you a lesson at your dinner time." Murari, of course, did not pay any regard to this threat. Indeed, he forgot all about it in a few minutes.

When Murari sat down to eat his meals, he heard a child's sweet voice calling him by name from outside ; and in a

* This highly philosophical work taught the seemingly atheistical doctrine of the Adwaitabadees which is, He and I are the same.

moment afterwards, the charming little figure of Nimai stood before him, looking down at his plate of rice. Murari having just glanced at the intruder, unconcernedly resumed his meal. But Nimai was there with an object in view. When the physician had almost finished it, the child in the execution of his threat uttered in the morning, performed a certain natural office upon the contents of the philosopher's plate !

For a moment, Murari was stunned with surprise and indignation. But Nimai, after a short pause, aroused him from his stupor by addressing him in these unexpected terms : "Murari," said he, "give up teaching your false and dangerous philosophy and learn to worship Sree Hari with your whole heart and soul. Thus do I treat the plate of rice of him who pretends to believe that he is the self-same with God Almighty." So saying, quick as a flash of lightning, he vanished !

The conduct of Nimai had a wonderful effect upon Murari. He was scandalized and enraged for a moment. But a little reflection enabled him to realize the situation, namely, that it was simply impossible for an ordinary child of five to administer so weighty a lesson. * A thrill passed through his frame ; a sudden idea seemed to have overtaken him, and he felt a joy, such as he had never experienced before. The idea filled his mind that it was Bal-Gopal, that is, the child Krishna, Who had spoken to him though his little visitor.

Impelled by this conviction he hastened to the residence of Jagannath Misra and prostrated himself at the feet of the boy ! But Nimai retreated behind his mother and screened himself within the folds of her clothes. Jagannath was no less

* Let it be borne in mind that one of the cardinal doctrines of the religion taught by Nimai (Sree Gauranga) was love and reverence for God, and as Murari's teaching was quite the opposite, viz., that man being equal with God could gain nothing by revering Him, Nimai wished to show his utter contempt for the philosopher's doctrine by what he did.

astonished than shocked to see a full-grown man and one so universally respected, doing reverence to his child. He therefore protested with vehemence against this act of Murari, saying, "What are you doing, my good physician? Do you mean to bring evil upon my boy by prostrating yourself before him? For, as you are aware, when a superior bows down before an inferior he brings misfortune upon the latter." "Misra!" said Murari, "you will soon know who your son is."

CHAPTER II.

VISVARUP AND ADVAITA.

WE have already alluded to Visvarup, the elder brother of Nimai. He was now sixteen and Nimai six years of age. His surpassing personal attractions, his acute intelligence and profound learning, made him the observed of all observers in Nadia. Coming in contact with Advaita Acharjya of Santipur, he attached himself to him. He, with Advaita, deplored the wickedness of men, and prayed for the advent of Sree Krishna. Unlike the frolicsome youngsters who surrounded him, Visvarup was of a serious turn of mind. He ate and slept but little ; and in the company of Advaita and the latter's followers, he was accustomed to pass his days and nights, in devotional exercises. From Advaita the others had imbibed the notion that the All-merciful Sree Krishna, seeing the pitiful condition of His children, was coming, or was already come upon earth.

Before Nimai's birth Visvarup having no brother or sister, his whole affection was centred in a cousin, younger than himself, named Lokenath, the son of his maternal uncle and the grand-child of Nilambar. When Nimai was born the joy of Visvarup knew no bounds ; and, as a matter of course, he grew very fond of his younger brother. As Nimai grew older, he too became more and more attached to his elder brother.

After his acquaintance with Advaita, Visvarup soon became a great favourite of that saint, and of the other members of

his religious fraternity. Visvarup, on his part, was highly pleased with the religious truths propounded by Advaita. He therefore passed the greater part of his time in the company of that great believer in the religion of faith, reverence and love.

When Visvarup studied at the tole he came home every afternoon ; but when he became a member of Advaita's association, he oftentimes forgot to come home for his mid-day meals. Nimai, then a boy, was often sent to Advaita's house to call his brother home. The child Nimai was so engaging and attractive that Advaita and his companions would often gaze at him with admiration. "This boy draws my heart towards him ; I wonder, why," thought Advaita.

When Visvarup was about sixteen, Jagannath contemplated having him married, which coming to the knowledge of the young lad, the intelligence literally stunned him.

A worldly life had lost all attraction for him, and he had resolved not to marry. "Why should I, by marrying, chain myself to the earth ?"—said he. "Life is short ; I have scarcely sufficient time for devotion. Certainly I have no time to marry and thereby perhaps forget my God." On the other hand, should he disobey his father and mother it would be a serious breach of duty, of which Visvarup could never be guilty. What then would he do under the circumstances ? He determined upon leaving home and relinquishing the world altogether !

His quitting home would certainly be a great blow to his affectionate parents ; but he felt that, though his desertion must make them unhappy for a time, it would eventually tend to their real welfare, since, as the Shastras teach, if one individual in a family becomes a Sannyasi the whole family is saved thereby. There was yet one more great objection to his going ; the thought of leaving Nimai behind him weighed heavily on his heart. Besides, in his absence, the education of his younger brother would be neglected and he would be literally without a

guardian. But leave the world he must, being convinced that his remaining in it would lead to his spiritual ruin.

Having made up his mind to go, he called his mother aside and said to her : "When Nimai grows up kindly give him this book," saying which he attempted to hand it over to her. But Shachee, startled by his words, replied, "What do you mean? You may give him the book yourself."

Whereupon Visvarup said ; "I would prefer that you should keep it for him, mother. If I live and the opportunity offers, I shall ask you for it at the proper time and myself give it to him, but, mother, life is insecure." The simple-hearted Shachee was thus prevailed upon to accept the book, which she kept by her in a safe place, wondering what her son meant.

Visvarup having told his cousin, Lokenath, of his intention of retiring from the world, the latter, who had the highest respect for Visvarup on account of his many superior qualities, expressed his determination to accompany him, and to this Visvarup reluctantly assented.

Visvarup, then a boy of sixteen, and his cousin, Lokenath, younger than himself, occupied the same room in the house of Jagannath. Having fixed upon a certain night for their departure, they retired to their bed-room at the usual hour, but did not sleep, and at midnight got up and went forth to the compound. From there Visvarup, having bowed to his sleeping parents, and prayed to Sree Krishna that He might protect his younger brother, started off in the cold, star-lit air, accompanied by his boy-companion, and proceeded fast towards the river. A ferry boat at that hour was not to be had. Besides, the lads had no wish to leave a clue to their movements behind them. They, therefore, swam across the river, and thence, with their wet clothes on, walked in a westwardly direction rapidly, in order to elude pursuit. The only property that Visvarup carried with him was a copy of the Bhagavat

Geeta which, while crossing the river, he held above water with his left hand, while he swam with the right! Visvarup was prepared for even a greater sacrifice. Day after day they journeyed on, still in a westerly direction, now passing through wildernesses, and now through inhabited plains, relying for their subsistence on the charity of the villagers, and suffering untold hardships and privations, until they became acquainted with an ascetic of the Puri sect, by whom, after a short time, Visvarup was initiated as one of the order with the title of Sankararanya Puri. The initiation of Visvarup entitled him to initiate others, and Lokenath was in due course initiated by him. Lokenath thus became the bearer of his Guru's (Visvarup's) staff and water pot. These two young lads, who had never before known what misery was, now suddenly found themselves cast upon the world, without a home, without friends, and without any means of support.

On the following day, Shachee and Jagannath came to know that Visvarup had left home and society to lead a life of austerity in the wilderness. The news stunned the parents. They, however, admired the sacrifice, and loved him the more for it. A young lad of sixteen, without food or shelter, in the wilderness,—a tender youth, reared in comfort, now an ascetic,—formed a picture which moved the entire town of Nadia. They reflected on his surpassing loveliness, his uncommon learning, and his unblemished and noble character, and keenly felt the loss of such an estimable model young man. As for Shachee and Jagannath, they hardly knew how they should live without their beloved son.

Friends came to console them, who suggested that one ascetic in a family ensured the salvation of all; but not even the recognition of this fact could succeed in calming their anguished feelings. Their hearts were chastened by the affliction, and Jagannath prayed to God that his child might have the grace to keep his vow! Reader, do you understand what this means?

Visvarup had taken the vow of renunciation, which means that he had sworn never to possess any property, or hold communication with women or worldly men. He was prohibited under his vow from residing in his native village, and from taking any food that he might specially like, or which was particularly good to taste. To this hard life Visvarup had consecrated himself. If, after having taken the vow of renunciation, a man returns to society, he becomes an apostate, or what is called a "fallen" man, forsaken both of man and God. Very naturally, if Jagannath had listened to the dictates of his heart, he would have directed his son to return ; but then that would have been doing an injury to the latter. So Jagannath sacrificed his own feelings for the benefit of his son, and prayed to God thus : " O merciful Lord ! My heart yearns after my boy. I, a frail man, cannot overcome nature. But do not, I beseech you, listen to me. Let not my son break his vow by returning home, thereby destroying his prospect of salvation in a future life." Shachee had, at one time of her life, uttered a similarly disinterested prayer. The saintly chroniclers of the Leela of the Lord Gauranga describe in raptures the character of both Shachee and Jagannath, and attribute to both the possession of mental and physical graces of the highest order. As simple as children in their manners, they were yet wise and intelligent. With hearts as soft as the Shreesh flower, they never quailed before duties which required uncommon firmness of mind. They were esteemed universally in that great city of Nadia for their unattainable excellence. No wonder that they had such a son as Nimai. No wonder that God Almighty should enter the womb of such a virtuous and pious woman as Shachee !

Nimai was then about six. Hearing wailing from outside where he was playing, he came to his mother. He heard that his brother had gone away and would never return. Nimai fainted away !

In their anxiety for Nimai, Shachee and Jagannath, for the time, forgot Visvarup. After much tending, the child recovered his consciousness. The father and the mother were deeply moved at the depth of the brotherly love displayed by Nimai. Nimai's condition gave them a fright: they therefore gave up their lamentation to take care of their little child. They began to console him with endearing words, and imprinted a thousand kisses on his cheeks. Nimai was seated on the lap of his father: he seemed then to be fully aware of the circumstances which surrounded them. After much effort he said in half-choked accents,—“Oh father, Oh mother! grieve no more. I will take my brother's place and do my duty towards you.”

Visvarup became an ascetic in his sixteenth year. He departed this life, it is stated, in a very wonderful manner at Pandarpur near Puna, two years after his initiation. Sivananda, (more of whom hereafter) was present at the time. His son, Karnapur, in one of his works, writes:—“Visvarup, surrounded by his disciples, disappeared from their midst in a wonderful manner. His soul took the shape of a mass of light as strong as a ‘thousand suns’ and mounted up. My father saw it.” Sivananda came to Navadwip with the news, ; but, for obvious reasons, it was not communicated to Shachee and Jagannath. Nineteen years later Nimai himself visited the place where his elder brother had disappeared.

CHAPTER III.

NIMAI SEES SPIRITUAL VISVARUP.

THE grief that overtook his parents led Nimai to give up his sports and childish pranks. He was now rarely out of their sight ; and, believing that if he minded his books it would please them, he began to bestow attention on his studies. His father taught him while Nimai sat on his lap, and Shachee watched him with tender interest. The parents were very much consoled by this change in the wild boy, and by the ardent solicitude that he displayed in assuaging their grief. But an incident, fraught with important results, spoiled the happy arrangement. One day Nimai chewed a betel which formed a part of the offerings that had been presented to the household Deity, and he instantly fainted away ! His parents, however, accustomed to such fits, were not very much alarmed. They did all that lay in their power to bring him back to his senses. On coming round Nimai told a very strange story. He said, "My brother Visvarup took me away and asked me to relinquish the world like him. I answered by saying to him that, 'Being a mere boy I do not understand what it is to become a Sannyasi. I shall remain and serve my father, mother, and above all, God.' Thereupon he said to me, 'Very well, return and tender my salutation to our parents.' Thus saying he brought me home, and then left me."

Shachee and Jagannath heard him with joy, not unmixed with sorrow. They were glad, because it was to them like news from their lost son, and they were glad that he continued to love

them. They were, however, alarmed at the attempt made by Visvarup to take Nimai away from them. Shachee soon forgot this cause of alarm, but Jagannath Misra brooded over it day and night, and at last resolved to stop the education of Nimai ! He argued the matter in this wise : “ Education opened the eyes of Visvarup to the vanity of the world, and drove him from home to devote himself exclusively to the culture of his spiritual nature. Education will similarly affect Nimai, and he may, like his brother, leave this world when quite a boy.” One morning he said to his son,—“Child, put an end to your studies. If you have the least affection for me, do not disregard my injunction.”

Dutiful Nimai did not disobey his father’s command : he stopped his studies and returned to his previous wild habits. Formerly he played at or near home, but now he extended his range to the whole town. Formerly his play was like that of a little child, but now it was that of a boy. He went out to bathe in the river, and did not return soon. Decent people were much annoyed by his frolics in the river. He would dive into the water and pull even elderly people by their legs. He would take away the flowers meant for religious purposes and worship himself with them ; he would also sometimes himself worship the gods with the flowers intended for religious ceremonies ; and sometimes he would actually eat up the offerings intended for the gods.

If Shachee bore his frolics patiently, the neighbours refused to do so. Complaint after complaint against him reached Jagannath, who appeased the complainants by entreaties. Women and young girls likewise besieged Shachee with similar complaints, and she humbly asked them to excuse the wayward child. Sometimes Shachee chid Nimai ; sometimes she threatened him with punishment. On such occasions Nimai replied—“ Why, you are determined that I should be a dunce, and I must act as such.” This retort from the child cut Shachee to the quick, and

she suggested to her husband that the child was wild simply because he was not permitted to read. But Jagannath was inexorable in his determination.

It must be stated, however, that though Nimai played all sorts of pranks on his neighbours, he never did any serious mischief to anybody. On the contrary, his pranks caused more merriment than anger. His jokes made his victims laugh with him. But, as has been stated, complaints were constantly reaching Shachee about her son's conduct, and the proud mother did not like it. Besides she had no faith in the policy of her husband, though she did not venture to expostulate with him for it.

One day Shachee was so angry that she actually took a cane in her hand to punish her boy, and this led Nimai to fly before her and seek refuge in the midst of cast-away cooking pots. In that impregnable fort sat Nimai defiant! "Come, you naughty boy," said she, half threateningly and half coaxingly. Without deigning a reply Nimai began to sing a song. Shachee then wept. This sight Nimai could not bear. He felt that he was defeated. Said he: "Why do you weep, mother? You wish that I should not misbehave. Is it not so? But how am I to distinguish evil from good without education? You are determined to make me a dunce, and I will show you what a happy life the parents may expect who have a dunce for a son."

Said some other ladies who had now joined Shachee, "How foolish you are! Most children require to be driven to school, while your child is fretting his life away because you do not allow him to read. You will best serve your own interests and his by letting him have his way in this matter."

Shachee pondered. She too agreed in that view. She promised to procure, if possible, the desired permission from her husband, whereupon Nimai agreed to come forth from his

position in the midst of the earthen pots, the touch of which was abomination.

Agreeably to the wishes of his neighbours and his wife, Jagannath allowed Nimai to resume his studies. Nimai at once gave up his wild habits and devoted himself to his books. His intellect surprised every one. He read and mastered in a surprisingly short time whatever he was taught.

When Nimai was nine years of age, his father proposed to invest his boy with the sacred thread. The ceremony was performed with some pomp. For the purpose of the ceremony he was, as is usual, made a juvenile Sadhu, and initiated as a Brahmin with the sacred *gyattree* by his father himself. With his head shaved, his body scrupulously clean and dressed in the garments of a servant of the Lord, he looked the personification of *bhakti* itself. People gazed at him with reverence and admiration. Was he the Bal-Gopal himself?—was the idea which presented itself to the minds of many, while others thought that he was some other god who had taken a human shape with some unknown object in view. While in this state of mind, the spectators beheld a wonderful sight. For, as soon as the father breathed the sacred verse of initiation into his ears, Nimai fainted away with a scream! His every hair stood on end, and a supernatural effulgence shone forth from his body and limbs. Tears began to stream from his eyes in such a manner as to wet the ground beneath him.

As the boy fainted away in the midst of a large number of people, there was some confusion at first. But the wonderful spectacle soon hushed them into silence, and gradually moved them to tears. They were overpowered by a feeling of *bhakti*, i. e., loving devotion to God. At that moment, it appeared to most of the spectators that the boy was no other than Bal-Krishna or the boy-Krishna Himself. The learned Brahmins present had a consultation amongst themselves as to

the cause of the phenomenon before them. It was agreed amongst them that Sree Krishna, seeing the boy so divinely beautiful, had taken possession of his body in order to manifest Himself to men. All available means were adopted to bring the boy back to his senses; and when eventually he had regained consciousness, the spectators felt disposed to question him as to the cause of his swoon. But the appearance of the boy was so awe-inspiring that they did not venture on the familiarity.

He was then taken to a secluded place and kept there, as was the custom. When the period of seclusion was over, friends, according to custom, came to present him with alms or presents. A poor Brahmin, having nothing else to present, gave him a nut to chew. Nimai accepted the nut and began to chew it. While doing so he called his mother to him. She came at once; but the appearance of her child bewildered and somewhat frightened her. She had no doubt in her mind that it was her boy who was sitting before her. But, at the same time, she could hardly venture to think that he was her son. For, the child was enveloped with a halo of powerful light, observing which Shachee stood awe-stricken and trembling before Him!

Nimai addressed his mother, with exceeding gravity: "I am leaving this body. I shall come again. The body I am leaving behind me is your son, whom you should tend with great tenderness when I am gone."* So saying, Nimai made an effort to bow to his mother; but before he could fully perform this act, he became unconscious. The boy then, to all intents and purposes, seemed dead. Shachee, alarmed, sprinkled water on his face, called him loudly by his name, and by this and other means

* This may either mean "always take care of the body of your son" or "revive him when I leave this body, for he will fall into a swoon." The latter is most probably the meaning of the expression.

succeeded in restoring him to consciousness. As soon as Nimai had fallen down in a swoon, the light which had shone from his body, left him, and the halo which had surrounded his head disappeared, and with it disappeared his awful and reverence-inspiring aspect. Shachee was relieved to find her son restored again to his natural state.

This incident is recorded in Murari Gupta's notes, and he discourses on the matter at some length.* The incident suggests the following questions : Who was Nimai, the son of Shachee ? Who was He that came and disappeared ? We shall leave these questions alone for the present, and take them up hereafter in their proper place. We shall here only mention the fact that He who said, "I shall come again" did come, and did then disclose

* Says Murari :—

ततः कदाचिन्निवसन् स्वमन्दिरे
समुदादादित्यकराति लोहितः ।
स्वतेजसा पूरित देह आवभा-
वुवाच मातर्वचनंकुरूष्व मे ॥
तच्चैव युक्तं स्वसुतं स्वतेजसा
विलोक्य भीता तमुवाच विस्मिता ।

* * * *

ब्रजामि देह परिपालयस्व
सुतस्य निश्चेष्ट गतं क्षणार्धं ॥

A stronger light than that of the rising red sun emitted from and surrounded the body of young Nimai.

Seeing this godly light surrounding her son, Shachee was terrified and bewildered.

Nimai said to his mother, "Mother, I am going. Take care of the unconscious body of your son."

His identity, Jagannath, who was absent, when informed of this wonderful incident, asked Nimai to explain it. Nimai replied that he knew nothing of it, and had not the least recollection of the sayings attributed to him ; and Jagannath was convinced that Nimai absolutely did know nothing of the matter.

It was a now a happy time with Jagannath. Nimai thought of nothing but his studies, and was a very well-behaved boy. He was taught by two learned men, Pundits Sudarsana and Vishnu, in whose opinion, there was not a student in the world so intelligent and so keen.

Nimai was now about eleven years old, and Shachee about fifty-two. Jagannath had become old. He got an attack of fever, which proved fatal. The critical moment came, and the soul of Jagannath was about to quit his body. Then Nimai, losing his self-control, caught hold of his father's feet and wept. Said he :—"Father is a sweet word which I shall never more utter. To whose care do you leave your orphan ? Who will take charge of my education ?"

Jagannath, recovering for a moment, held Nimai on to his bosom, and said : "I am going away with my desire unfulfilled : I leave you to God, my child. Pray, do not grieve at my departure." As the last word was uttered, Jagannath departed from this world, resigned to the will of the Deity.

CHAPTER IV.

PANDIT GANGADAS.

THE knowledge that she, with her twelve-year old child, had been left utterly unprovided for so engrossed the mind of Shachee that she had little leisure to mourn for her departed husband. Besides, knowing the affectionate nature of her son, she endeavoured to suppress her feelings lest by giving way to them she should remind her son of his bereavement. She therefore refrained from indulging in the grief she felt for the loss of her husband. She resolved upon giving him no opportunity of dwelling upon his helpless state. She had been thrown into a state of destitution, and she had to provide for them both. She therefore devoted all her energies to furthering the welfare of her boy. The household expenses were small, and she managed, one way and another, to provide for herself and her son. But she felt especially anxious about his education. After much deliberation she, with the advice of her kinsmen, placed the child under the tuition of Pandit Gangadas.

Gangadas Bhattacharya, absolutely irreproachable in character, was unrivalled in his knowledge of Sanskrit Grammar. Shachee, taking her son to him, said, with pathetic earnestness, "I make over this fatherless child to you. Teach my son. You will earn more fame and religious merit by teaching him than others, for he is an orphan."

Gangadas replied : "I shall think myself fortunate in having Nimai for a pupil. You need not be anxious about his

education. I shall teach him all that I can. Rest assured, fatherless as he is, that circumstance will not in any way interfere with his studies." Nimai bowed to his teacher, who thereupon pronounced this benediction upon him,—“ May you be blessed with knowledge !”

From this time Nimai regularly prosecuted his studies at the tole of Gangadas. Nimai's mental powers were extraordinary. He understood his lessons as soon as they were explained to him, so that in a short time he actually became the first student in the school, though he was not yet fourteen years old. Now, it must be borne in mind that the pupils in the foremost places were generally grown up young men of from 25 to 30 years of age. Kamalakanta was a class-mate of Nimai and renowned for his extraordinary knowledge of Rhetoric ; so was Krishnananda, the author of *Tantrasar* ; Murari Gupta also studied at this tole. Nimai wanted to hold intellectual discussions with them, but none of them would condescend to argue with a boy of fourteen. Nimai was not, however, to be thwarted thus. He began to tease Murari at every opportunity in order to provoke him to an intellectual fight. In this way Murari was at length led to hold a discussion with him. The result was that Murari, the grown-up pandit of some twenty summers, was defeated by the lad of 14 ! Murari was surprised and stared at his antagonist. Nimai met his gaze with a smile, and putting forth his hand touched his person, when lo ! the young physician, who felt a thrill of ecstasy passing through his whole frame, presented the appearance of one under the influence of a supernatural spell. This unusual experience added still more to the surprise of Murari. He suddenly recollected the many wonderful incidents in connection with the boy which he himself and others had witnessed. He looked at Nimai's face and found that his eyes, resembling lotus petals, beamed with love and intelligence. He thus considered : “Who may this

boy be ? Is he really more than human ?" Be it remembered, Murari was, by nature, a sceptic.

When Nimai was at his studies, he went through them in right earnest. He attended school in the morning. His afternoons were devoted to the preparation of his lessons for the following day. Whenever he met a scholar out of school hours he held intellectual conversations and discussions with him. When he went to bathe in the Ganges, he had similar discussions with the students whom he came across there. After having worsted his competitors at one ghat, he would remove to another for fresh encounters. Sometimes he would swim across the broad river to the bathing places on the opposite bank in search of new opponents.

We have stated above, that whenever he met a student in his walks he entered into argument with him. But he did not behave in exactly the same manner with every student. A Vaishnava was the particular object of his attack. He never spared a Vaishnava, even if he were as old as his father. It is, however, a remarkable fact that those with whom he was in apparent hostility in his youth, became his devoted adherents in after-life, and the greater had been the intensity of this apparent animosity the greater became the devotion of his victims. Kamalakanta, Krishnananda and Murari were his companions at school, but it was with Murari alone that he was constantly at strife.

It was at this early age that he wrote his commentaries on the Sanskrit Grammar, which gradually became popular among men of learning even at Navadvip, where it was no easy matter to make a new book acceptable to the public. Only the foremost amongst thousands of the most learned men could do it.

After completing the study of Grammar, he devoted himself to the study of Logic, at the school of the celebrated Professor of Nyaya, Vasudev Sarvabhauma.

Nimai, being only a boy, did not attract the notice of Vasudev, who was surrounded by thousands of the brightest intellects of the time. But he soon became known to the students, especially to Raghunath, the author of the celebrated book on Logic called Didheeti. Anything uncommon naturally attracts the curiosity of man, and the extraordinary intellect of Nimai attracted Raghunath's attention. He was amazed to find in Nimai, though much younger than himself, a rival. He had believed that he himself was the most intelligent youth in the world, even more intelligent than Sarvabhauma, his teacher; but he found his master in Nimai, though the latter was only a very young lad. The goal of Raghu's ambition was to be the first man of learning in the world, and he had thought that the road was clear before him. But little Nimai threatened to baffle his hopes in this direction, and the closer became their acquaintance, the more was he confirmed in this fear. It was solely owing to the amiable disposition of Nimai that they nevertheless continued to be intimate friends.

One day Vasudev asked Raghunath to explain a most abstruse and subtle logical fallacy, and it took the latter a whole day to arrive at the right answer. "Why are you cooking your food so late?" asked Nimai of Raghunath. In reply, Raghu said that the professor had given a very difficult problem to him to solve, and that he had determined to solve it before breaking his fast. The solution had taken him the whole day to work out, and that was the reason of his cooking late. Nimai, with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes, said: "The problem must be a very complicated one to require a whole day for its solution from a giant of intellect like yourself. What is it, pray?"

Raghu having told him what the problem was, Nimai gave the correct solution there and then! Raghu gazed at him in wonder and bewilderment. "This boy must be a god!" thought he. While Nimai was studying the Nyaya philosophy he was led to

write a commentary upon it. Raghu was engaged on a similar work, being busy with the composition of his great *Didheeti*. He, however, came to know that Nimai was employed in a like undertaking. This made him nervous, and he wanted to see Nimai's production. But he doubted whether Nimai would agree to show it to him, knowing that he himself would not be so generous under similar circumstances. He, however, ventured to ask Nimai, who, to his surprise, promised to read it to him when they were crossing the river on the ferry, which they had to do every day when coming to the tole.

The next day, as they were crossing the river, Nimai read out his commentary to Raghunath. While Nimai read, Raghunath listened with undivided attention. Poor Raghu found, to his dismay, that Nimai's was a masterly exposition,—concise, clear and original. The more he heard, the more despondent he became. All hopes of occupying the first place in the world as a Professor of Nyaya faded before him slowly and surely, till, at last, in the height of his mortification, he burst into tears ! Nimai had not the least suspicion of what was working in the mind of his friend. Seeing him in tears, Nimai, anxiously holding him in his arms, affectionately said : “Brother, what means this ? What makes you weep ?”

Raghunath, who could no longer conceal the cause of his vexation, replied :—“Brother Nimai, do you not understand why I am weeping ? I was ambitious of obtaining the first place as a Professor of Nyaya and had put forth all my powers in an attempt to give to the world a work on that philosophy which should beat all its predecessors. But that hope is completely blasted, for my poor book must give way before yours.”

Nimai was almost moved to tears. His decision was soon made. He clasped Raghunath's neck and said : “And is that all ? Then weep no more, my brother ! This Nyaya is after all a fruitless philosophy, and, as such, can neither be bad nor good. Here it goes.” So saying, he flung his manuscript

into the river !* And from that moment he gave up the study of the philosophy of Nyaya. Thus Nimai's Nyaya was lost to the world, and the Didheeti of Raghunath came to be regarded as the first authority on the subject.

Nimai now found himself strong enough to be able to start a tole for himself, and this he did in the worship-hall of a rich Brahmin named Mukunda Sanjya. He was then only sixteen years old, and was the youngest professor who had ever taken charge of a tole, certainly in Nadia. Nimai's tole, however, flourished. His fame as a successful and learned teacher spread far and wide, and students flocked to him from all parts of the country. Nimai made grammar and philology† the subjects of study in his institution. About this time Nimai was married, young as he was, to Lakshmi, the daughter of Vallabh Acharjya. The arrangements made for the wedding were on a humble scale, and only relations and intimate friends of the family were invited thereto. The wedding day having come, the guests arrived, and Shachee felt happy for the first time since the death of her husband. She welcomed the guests with becoming humility. She explained to them that her son being an orphan, and as yet too young to acquire a fortune by his own exertions, was not in a position to receive them in a manner befitting the occasion. They would, she felt sure, excuse his shortcomings in this respect, in consideration of his poor circumstances, and because his father was dead.

* "ADVAITA PROKASH."

† Generally speaking, only one branch of study was taken up in a tole. Occasionally a professor took up more than one subject, as in the case of Vasudeva Sarvabhauma, whose title Sarvabhauma indicated that he was versed in every branch of knowledge. But those who took up many subjects were considered, generally speaking, masters of none. In starting a tole, a professor had not only to provide accommodation for his students but also their food. Of course, they were taught free. Society maintained the professors by gifts made during festivals and social ceremonies.

Shachee was addressing her guests in this fashion, when she was suddenly interrupted by the sight of her son shedding a profusion of tears from his downcast eyes. "What means this, Nimaï ?" she asked in amazement. "Do you want to break my heart by shedding tears on a happy occasion like this ? What ails you ?" Nimaï recovering himself with difficulty, replied : "I am weeping for my dead father, whose memory you have just recalled, and for my lost brother. If they could have been with us to-day how happy we should all have been." When her son had done speaking, she was overcome with grief for having, in her folly, thoughtlessly reminded her tender-hearted son of his sad bereavements. Nimaï then endeavoured to soothe her with his caresses.

As a professor, Nimaï was expected to be serious in all his movements. But alas ! he was as playful as ever, and this scandalized his brother professors. He swam in the river like an ordinary man. He was sometimes seen running up and down the streets. He played with his students, many of whom were older than he. His brother professors, a little jealous of him for his learning, spoke ill of him for his want of gravity, behind his back ; but they ventured not to utter a word before him. His personality was such that any undue familiarity with him was not possible. Indeed, the foremost professors quailed in his presence. Although he played with his students they nevertheless always regarded him with becoming reverence and awe.

Nimaï used to indulge in pranks of his own at the bathing ghats, where he came across thousands of students. In the same free manner he conducted himself when he met them during his afternoon stroll. Dressed with exquisite taste, in a silken *dhuti*, the savant of seventeen was accustomed to emerge from his house followed by his pupils and friends. Men and women gazed admiringly at his charming figure. His brother professors regarded him with various feelings, some with admiration and

respect, and some with envy and jealousy. But he attracted notice wherever he went. An impression prevailed that a sooth-sayer had predicted the installation of a Hindu Raja on the throne of Gaur, then occupied, as said before, by Hossein Shah, a Musulman. The people of Nadia were almost unanimously agreed that the man destined to regain Gaur for the Hindus, was no other than Nimai, the youthful Pandit, for he looked every inch a prince. Such was his commanding character that no one ever ventured openly to cross Nimai. But amongst those who were jealous of his genius and extraordinary attainments he had, as already stated, many detractors who, always respectful in his presence, were in the habit of saying many unkind things about him in his absence. Says one : He comports himself as a prince ; but his father Jagannath's poverty was a by-word. Says another : He is arrogant and proud, qualities which are intolerable to God, and must some day bring him to grief. Says yet another : His cleverness is mere precociousness ; such levity as he displays is incompatible with great ability or profound learning. Fishes make a great deal of noise in shallow water.

Nimai seemed quite unaware of the comments passed upon him by friends and foes. He really roamed about just like a prince, conscious of his intellectual powers, of his integrity, and of his goodness. He never quailed but when he was in the society of ladies. Naturally as modest as a girl of fifteen, the presence of ladies brought a blush to his cheeks, and made him hang down his head !

His conversation was always intellectual, and he interspersed his more serious remarks with lively sayings which made both him and his hearers laugh. He was always in high spirits, as if he had never known what care was, or had found the secret of invariable content. His jokes being always innocent never offended his victims ; but, on the contrary, endeared him the more to them. His principal objects of attack, as before stated, were those who

professed the Vaishnava faith. Mukunda Datta of Chittagong, a young Vaishnava, a sweet singer and a follower of Advaita, comes across Nimai. Mukunda tries to avoid his tormentor, and goes to the other side of the crowded street to escape from the clutches of Nimai. But Nimai perceives his intention and accosts his followers thus: "Is not that Mukunda? Why does the fellow avoid me?"

"Perhaps because he has urgent business," replies a follower.

"No," rejoins Nimai, "it is not that. He is a pious Vaishnava. He thinks, man is born to pass his days in devotion. But my conversations are always ungodly, and it is therefore only natural that he should avoid me." Having said this, he loudly addresses Mukunda thus: "Why do you avoid me, Mukunda? Is it because you believe that I am an infidel? You shall never escape me, however. In time, Mukunda, I shall be a Vaishnava also; but not a humbug like you. I shall be such a Vaishnava as the gods themselves shall come to my doors. Mind, I shall then enslave you, compel you to follow me like a shadow, and make your escape impossible." Those who are following Nimai laugh, and some of them think that Nimai is really a little bit of an infidel.

Gadadhar, another Nyaya student, younger than Nimai, and almost as beautiful in person, was much given to prayer and devotion. He followed Nimai like a shadow; nevertheless, one of the greatest delights of the latter was to provoke him to a literary contest. Gadadhar would excuse himself, but Nimai was not to be cheated out of his sport in that way. He used all the arts of a cunning lad to provoke him to a polemical discussion. Gadadhar was good nature itself, and bore the taunts, sneers and challenges of Nimai with inexhaustible good humour. But Nimai by his persistence always in the end succeeded in entangling him in some argument or other, from which he refused to release his victim until he had made him cry!

After having disposed of Gadadhar, Nimai perhaps finds himself face to face with Sreebas. This pious Vaishnava was next in importance only to Advaita. He had been a friend of Jagannath, and he and his wife Malini had tended Nimai in his infancy. Sreebas loved Nimai as a son, and the latter was bound to obey him as a parent. On meeting Sreebas, Nimai, therefore, salutes him and stands before him in an attitude of respect, with bent head. Sreebas is deceived by the submissive attitude of Nimai and addresses him thus : "Well, where are you going to now, restless and unruly youth ? On no pious errand, I am sure. Pray, what is the use of all your learning and polemics ? They merely nourish your pride and vanity. They are wise who acquire only that knowledge which secures salvation. What are you doing, day and night ? Such intellectual exercises as you indulge in will do you no good. Learn to be a pious man and a servant of Sree Krishna, and thereby fulfil our earnest wishes."

The fact is, Sreebas, as a pious Vaishnava, desired that Nimai would join his sect, to which his (Nimai's) father had belonged. His sect was not in power, rather in disgrace, in Nadia. He fancied that if Nimai joined the Vaishnavas, so influential was the young pandit, that the sect would flourish under his auspices. Nimai's intellectual triumphs seemed to him only a dissipation of his energies, and he therefore addressed the former in all earnestness.

Nimai heard him patiently, maintaining the same reverential attitude, and appeared as if he were taking to heart every word of Sreebas. When Sreebas had finished, Nimai said : "You see, pandit, I have become a professor at an early age. Let me enjoy my triumphs for a time. When I am tired of them, I shall send for some very good Vaishnava, and from him learn how to worship Sree Krishna. Rest assured that when I have once made up my mind to be a Vaishnava, I shall—." But Nimai

could not finish the sentence, being obliged to give vent to the laughter which up to then he had with the utmost difficulty suppressed. Sreebas laughed too ; but he was nevertheless disappointed, and not a little pained.

About this time, Nimai came across Iswar Puri, a Sannyasi, *i. e.*, one who has renounced the world. Originally an inhabitant of Kumarhatta, not far from Calcutta, he was a disciple of the celebrated Sannyasi, Madhavendra Puri, the most pious man of his age. He was known throughout India for his piety, and he, therefore, found a warm welcome in the city of Nadia. If love for Sree Krishna could be likened to an ocean, Iswar Puri day and night swam therein. Nimai one day suddenly meeting him in the street, respectfully saluted him. Iswar had heard of Nimai and was glad to meet him. Nimai invited him to dinner, and Iswar accepted the invitation, apparently unconsciously. For, the sight of Nimai engrossed his whole attention. Thought he in his mind : "Who can this being be ? Everything in him betokens divine influence. Is he more than human, a higher being in disguise?" Nimai broke in upon his reverie with a pleasantry. Said he : "Swami, why do you inspect me in this manner ? Do you find anything worth inspection in my person ? If you come to my place you will have ample opportunities of satisfying your curiosity." The dinner came off in due course, and in a very short time, the old Swami and the youthful pandit became intimate friends. The Swami, who was then writing a book on the love of Radha Krishna, requested Nimai to help him with corrections and suggestions. Nimai agreed, and together they spent their nights in the study of the new work of the Puri. Nimai was then barely eighteen. Iswar soon after quitted Nadia ; but six years later he and Nimai met again, and the Swami played an important part in the Leela of Nimai.

The tole of Nimai prospered, and he was getting more and more marked out from his fellows. Just at this time he was

suddenly overtaken by that mysterious malady which had affected him when he was being invested with the sacred thread. He suddenly swooned away, and showed all the signs of some supernatural influence working upon him. Some said that he was possessed by a devil, and some by a good spirit. But the rival professors, who regarded him with extreme jealousy, declared that it was a case of madness, pure and simple, brought on by over-exercise of the intellect, and they recommended that he should be kept in chains, and otherwise treated in a rigorous manner. Nimai being beside himself, they were thus given an opportunity of endeavouring to sway the mind of his unfortunate mother, whom they would fain convince that her son had become a hopeless lunatic.

Weeks passed and Nimai slowly recovered, none the worse for the attack and the treatment to which he had been subjected. When he had recovered, it was found that he had gained in every way by the seeming accident which had befallen him. One very salutary change was observed in him, namely, that he had become more sober and restrained.

Nimai, who had completed his eighteenth year, now conceived the idea of proceeding to the Eastern districts. His mother's permission was obtained after much persuasion; and he went thither with a large number of followers. His fame had preceded him, and he was welcomed everywhere. The news having spread, that the great boy-pandit Nimai, who looked more like a golden figure than a man of flesh and blood, had arrived among them, the people flocked from all sides to have a look at him. The object of Nimai's expedition to the Eastern districts was not known. It was generally believed that he had gone there with a view of collecting donations for his institution.

Nimai crossed the broad river Padma and settled down in a village on the other bank. Thither thousands came to him for instruction. The details of how he spent his time there are not

precisely known. They were recorded in a book called "Tapan Bijoy;" but though we are assured of its existence, we have not yet been able to get hold of a copy. This book gives the story of a Brahmin, Tapan Misra, who, being a man of superior position, suffered from doubts as to the nature of God and the best means to attain to Him, but was subsequently converted by Sree Gauranga. In other books we get a short account of this saint, and that to the following effect :

One day, while Nimai sat surrounded by his students, Tapan Misra pushed his way through them and fell at his feet. An elderly man, highly respected, Tapan's submissive attitude not only surprised all the students who were present there, but even Nimai himself, who, hurriedly helping him to rise, begged that he would not again prostrate himself before one who was young enough to be regarded as his son. Tapan said in reply : "First hear me, and then reprove me if you think fit. Death is approaching, and I have not made provision for the future life. It is not entirely my fault that I have not done so, for I do not know how to go about it. I have applied to many, but found every sage with an opinion of his on the subject, and their advice, instead of helping me, has only served to bewilder me still more. I had constantly prayed to God to give me the light, when suddenly, last night, a divine apparition came to me in a dream, who directed me to run to Nimai pandit, fall at His feet and seek His protection, for He was no other than the Supreme God come down upon earth to help His children." "Well," continued Tapan Misra, "I awoke and ran to Thee ; and now, dear Father, I throw myself at Thy lotus feet !"

Nimai, apparently unaware of his divinity, was abashed by the speech of the old Brahmin. When he had overcome his embarrassment, he said, "It was only a dream, pandit. Pray do not act in that manner again. I shall do my best to help you. Our sages have laid down the path of righteousness for us, which

we have only to follow ; and that even a blind man can do." He then proceeded to give Tapan instructions in religious matters. Then we find Nimai bidding him proceed to Benares with his wife and wait there till he should come to him.

Tapan immediately left home with his wife and proceeded to Benares, a thousand miles away, where he waited for Nimai. Eleven years elapsed before Nimai visited the famous city and met there his faithful disciple.

Tapan Misra, ever after his first interview with Nimai, believed him to be an incarnation of God ; and he is known to have been the first who formally accepted him as such. Nimai returned to Navadweep, having been away for almost a year, with a large number of pupils. On his arrival his mother told him the melancholy news that his wife Lakhmi had died during his absence.

While Nimai was staying in the Eastern districts he passed as a professor, and when he returned to Nadia he appeared in the same character. But yet he left those districts in a state of convulsion. The state of mind in which he left the people of those districts is given expression to in the following song which represents their feeling concerning him : "Listen ! for the Lord Nimai invites us. Come, let us follow him. He has constructed for us a boat made of the name of Hari in which he pilots men to the other bank (salvation). He is so universally merciful that he does not charge any fee for his services, but saves souls out of pure love. Come, therefore, all,—sinners, saints, the fallen, and the sadhus the depraved and the pure !"

From the above song one can form some idea of how the people had been moved by his presence in the East.

The means by which Nimai made numerous conversions in Eastern Bengal, is still a mystery. For, while there, he did not preach the love of Krishna. He did not even allow it to be known that he had a religious turn of mind. He was simply there as a professor of Language and Grammar. But he left

behind him numerous bhaktas, whose descendants even now form perhaps the strongest community in those districts. The fact must strike every attentive reader as very strange that Tapan, an elderly man of good position in society, leaving his home his property and his kindred, should exile himself thousands of miles away, for several years, at the bidding of a professor of Grammar who had barely reached the age of eighteen. Again, how was it that Nimai knew beforehand that he would go to Benares eleven years later and meet Tapan there ?

After his return to Navadweep, Nimai's tole grew in strength every day. With those who accompanied him to Nadia from Eastern Bengal, and with many of his former and numerous new pupils, his school in a short time became one of the most important in the city. As a teacher Nimai was unrivalled. He loved his pupils and his pupils loved him. He was revered by them as a divine being. He, on the other hand, treated his pupils as if they were his own children, and though he would allow no undue familiarity during school hours, or indeed at other times, yet he was as sprightly as the youngest of his pupils during play hours. Nimai now found himself in comfortable circumstances, donations in various shapes being showered upon him from all sides. These, however, he never touched. His mother was absolute mistress of the household.

About this time came the "world-conquering" Keshava of Kashmir in his career of victory to Nadia. As a savant he had defeated every professor in every learned city in India. Nadia alone, the last city in the course of his triumphal march, and the first in importance, remained to be conquered. He came to Nadia in great pomp, accompanied by numerous attendants, tents, elephants and horses. On his arrival he proclaimed his proud challenge, which was to this effect, that if there was any learned man in Nadia, he should come forward to try conclusions with him. If he should be worsted, all his property would

be forfeited to Nadia. But if he should win, Nadia would be at his disposal.

Now the learned men of Nadia were not the parties to be cowed by the vapourings of a pretender, hailing from a far-off province, considered outside the pale of civilization. They had seen many a pandit with equal pretensions worsted in their city. They felt therefore that they had nothing to fear from Keshava. But unfortunately a rumour was circulated and believed to be true, which took a firm hold on the public mind that Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning, had herself blessed Keshava and promised to preside over his speech during his intellectual combats. Now, although the pandits of Nadia never quailed before any man, however learned, hailing from any part of the world, they hesitated to meet Saraswati herself, to whose favour they themselves owed all their learning. The rumour noted above had thus a very demoralizing effect upon the savants of Nadia, and so Keshava moved triumphant through the city.

It was a moonlight night and Nimai and his numerous pupils were sitting on the river bank engaged in literary discussion, when Keshava, who happened to be passing by, stopped to listen to the conversation. After a while, becoming interested in the discussion, he joined the company and announced himself through his followers. Nimai rose, bowed respectfully and welcomed him. The stranger then sat down with the young professor and his pupils.

"You are Nimai Pandit, I believe," said the stranger. "I am glad to make your acquaintance. I am told in that junior branch of knowledge, Grammar and Philology, you have attained great proficiency ; and you have further the credit of having become a professor while yet quite a young man."

Nimai replied with becoming modesty, considering the position of the conqueror : "I am only a young student while you are a conqueror ; compared with you, I am as nothing. True, I

teach grammar ; but I assure you that I neither understand what I teach, nor do my pupils understand me."

To this the conqueror replied that such modesty became him well, but he must repeat that he had heard him well-spoken of everywhere in the city.

Nimai then addressed the conqueror thus : "You are a poet of world-wide reputation. Pray recite to us a description of the Ganges, so that our sins may be washed away." It should be borne in mind that the Ganges is a sacred river, and is worshipped as such. The conqueror was pleased at the request, and there and then began simultaneously to compose and recite his poem. He composed and recited one couplet and immediately followed it up by another, and then another. In this manner he composed a hundred couplets in a few minutes and recited them. His power amazed the students, who cried "Hari", "Hari" in a chorus of admiration. They trembled for the fate of their beloved professor !

They feared that their professor would prove no match for such a giant of learning and intellect. Nimai was the only person there who seemed to be unconcerned. He requested the conqueror to take up one of his couplets for paraphrase and analysis, "so that," continued Nimai, "we may appreciate its beauties." The conqueror asked him which couplet he wanted him to paraphrase, and Nimai thereupon repeated one from the middle, for the purpose. At this the conqueror was amazed. The current belief at that time was that although a man might acquire the power of retaining in his memory anything which he happened to hear once, this extraordinary gift could only be attained by propitiating the Goddess Saraswati by incessant devotion and prayer. The conqueror felt a suspicion that probably Nimai was one who had been thus favoured, and so he inquired : "How is it, pandit, that you have been able to repeat this couplet from the middle of a hundred such recited by me as quickly as my tongue would permit ?" It would seem

Nimai divined what was passing through the mind of the conqueror, for he replied with a mischievous smile: "You see, pandit, that as some persons become poets through the favour of Saraswati and can compose without premeditation, there may possibly be others who can retain in their memory anything that they have heard repeated but once."

This reply confirmed the conqueror in his opinion that Nimai was a *Srutidhar*, that is, one gifted with the power of retaining in memory what he has but once heard. He now naturally entertained a more respectful opinion of the boy pandit, and therefore took some pains to analyse the couplet and point out its beauties. When this had been done, Nimai praised him for his poetical powers and thanked him for the pains he had taken to enlighten and instruct them. "But," said he, "let us now examine the couplet for blemishes, if it has any."

"Blemishes in my couplet, and the boy pandit wanting to know them!" thought the proud and insulted conqueror, who immediately assumed an attitude of haughtiness. He replied, "Pandit, you teach grammar, which is only the a, b, c, of knowledge, and you have not studied rhetoric. How then can it be possible for you to understand either the beauties, or the blemishes, if there be any, in my composition?"

Nimai replying said: "True, I am a very ignorant youth, but that does not cover the blemishes of your composition if there be any. To me the composition seems to have five defects which somewhat mar its undoubted beauties." So saying he proceeded to criticise the couplet very minutely.*

The conqueror was obliged to defend his couplet. But the defects were so glaring and pointed out by Nimai in so forcible

* A report of the whole discussion, the beauties pointed out by the conqueror, and the defects by Nimai, are all omitted for obvious reasons. (*Vide Chaitanya Charitamrita* for a full report).

a manner, that the author, utterly confounded, gave vent to his feelings in a storm of irrelevant exclamations.

The scene had gathered a crowd. The confusion of the conqueror naturally gave rise to some hilarity among the bystanders ; for most men find a pleasure in the humiliation of a vain and aggressive person. Nimai, however, did not encourage it ; on the contrary, he tried to suppress it. Then addressing the conqueror, he said, in the politest manner possible : "Why, pandit, should you take the matter so seriously ? It is enough that you possess the divine gift of poesy. As for limitations, men must have them. Had not Kalidas and Bhababhuti* theirs ? You are an intellectual conqueror, a man highly favoured by the Goddess Saraswati. Pray, let us go home, for night is advancing, and to-morrow, with your concurrence, we shall have a discussion upon more solid subjects."

Somewhat mollified by this speech the conqueror left the place, humiliated to the utmost. He could neither eat nor sleep after his discomfiture, and spent the night in prayer. Early on the following morning he repaired to the house of Nimai, and as the latter issued from his room, prostrated himself at his feet with the deepest humility.

Nimai, surprised and pained at the spectacle, asked him to get up, and said, "What is the matter ? Why this deference to a youth who would be proud to become your pupil ? You pain me by your attitude. Pray, arise."

Keshava, with folded hands, replied : "Pray, hear me ! Last night, after leaving you, humbled by my defeat, I spent many hours in prayer and meditation. At length the Goddess Saraswati was pleased to answer my prayers and remove the film from my eyes. She made me understand that the true object of knowledge is salvation and not the satisfaction of vanity. 'You

* Considered to be the two greatest poets of India.

have served me faithfully,' said she, and you have been rewarded for it. What you consider a humiliation is in reality the highest blessing. For the Being, before whom you felt humbled, is no other than Sree Krishna, my Lord. Go to Him, fall at His feet, and give yourself up to Him.' Thus spoke the Goddess to me, and in obedience to her command, I now come to Thee, and ask Thee to accept me in Thy infinite mercy."

What Nimai did or said to him is not known. But the conqueror went away a changed man, converted and purged of all the baser passions. He distributed his vast wealth to the poor of Nadia, assumed the garb of an ascetic, and disappeared from the gaze of men for ever.

The discomfiture of Keshava created a profound sensation in Nadia. Relieved of his chilling presence, whom the savants of Nadia had been persuaded to regard as a favourite of Saraswati herself, the people began more clearly to realize the intellectual pre-eminence of Nimai. Shachee was in raptures over her son's position in the city. His friends congratulated her on being the mother of such a learned son. There was but one flaw in her happiness, and that was that her son was without a wife, and she knew not where to find a suitable bride for him. The bride must not only be a beautiful and well-disposed girl, but must also come of a high family, and above all, she must belong to the same sub-division of caste to which Nimai belonged. Nimai belonged to that section of the Brahmins who call themselves Vaidics. Their number had always been small, especially in Nadia. She could expect no help in this matter from her son, who apparently was even unconscious that there remained for him a duty to perform, namely, to marry.

Shachee, however, by accident, found a suitable bride for him at one of the bathing ghats where numbers of men and women were accustomed every day to perform their ablutions. Whenever Shachee went to bathe at the ghat, she encountered there a girl very

beautiful and modest who always appeared as if she were waiting for her. At sight of Shachee she would advance towards her and salute her. This action on the part of the girl extorted the admiration of Shachee, who, in return, always blessed her in these words: "May you find a good husband." When Shachee blessed her thus the girl never failed to blush profusely. One day Shachee feeling a strong curiosity about the girl asked her for her name. She replied that her name was Vishnupriya. On further enquiry Shachee learned that she was the daughter of Sanatan Misra, a wealthy and highly respected pandit of Nadia.

According to caste rules, Shachee might make Sanatan's daughter her daughter-in-law. In fact, Sanatan belonged to a higher rank than she, and so would be honouring her if he should agree to the alliance. But would Sanatan, higher in rank and position than Shachee, agree to marry his daughter to her son, who was the son of poor parents of lower rank than himself and of a somewhat eccentric turn of mind? This reflection caused Shachee no little uneasiness.

But it so happened that Sanatan, who loved his daughter ardently, had already set his heart on marrying her to Nimai, whom he regarded as the first pandit in Nadia and the comeliest being in the world. But knowing the wayward nature of Nimai, he had not ventured to make such a proposal to him either directly or through his mother. But Vishnupriya herself, though only a very young girl, had been over-powered by love* for Nimai.

* *Vide* Gauranga Uday by Pandit Mukund, as quoted in the "Vaishnavachar" by Nabadweep Goswami. I have not in this book cited the authorities for many statements, for, if I were to do so at all, I should be obliged to give my authority for every statement. This would make my task altogether impossible. Every statement, however, is supported by authority, and the reader can verify it by referring to the original sources. In matters concerning the God incarnate, I have, as a matter of course, tried to avoid mistakes, and have refrained from making even doubtful statements as far as it has been possible for me to do so.

Probably she had overheard the proposal of her marriage with Nimai talked of by her parents, and had had a glimpse of him at the bathing ghat. It was probably owing to this fact that at the bathing ghat she had selected Shachee, though a stranger to her, for her particular regard. Shachee felt such an affection for the modest girl, who saluted her every day, that she was at length induced to send a match-maker to Sanatan to sound him. Sanatan was, of course, agreeable, and the marriage was at once arranged.

Nimai, however, had apparently no knowledge of all these proceedings on the part of his mother. His mother arranged everything, and then informed Nimai that he was to marry the daughter of Sanatan Misra on an early date. The news of his coming marriage created joy in the hearts of his numerous friends and pupils. Buddhimanta Khan, a rich Kayastha landholder, said: "I shall bear all the expenses." "I shall share them with you," said Puruswatam, the wealthy Brahmin, in whose worship-hall Nimai held his tole. But Buddhimanta declined to have any partner in the undertaking, and added: "Perhaps you are not aware that we are not going to have the ceremony performed in the poor style of a Brahmin, but in that of a prince." Nimai's pupils also took the matter earnestly in hand, and every thing was arranged on a grand scale.

Nimai and the bride, as was the custom, were beautifully attired for the occasion. Nimai shone as brightly as the "full moon in the autumn season" without her spots. The gaze of all was upon him, as if to devour his beauty. The ladies especially admired him, but so pure were the feelings with which he inspired them, that none of them felt in the least jealous of the bride or envious of her good fortune.

Nimai proceeded to the house of the bride, accompanied by music, torches and fireworks, and followed by a large crowd

of people. Sanatan, the bride's father, had also made preparations on a grand scale to receive them. Nimai in his wedding dress is said to have eclipsed Cupid himself in beauty ; and when Vishnupriya was presented to the guests, dressed in silks and richly adorned with jewellery, she looked like some ethereal being. They were, according to custom, made to exchange a first glance at each other. Vishnupriya having lifted her veil was so over-powered by her natural modesty, that she was unable to open her eyes to gaze upon her Lord. But according to the rules of the ceremony, this was a duty to be performed ; and a screen was, therefore, erected round the bride and the groom that they might gaze at each other without being seen by other people. So their eyes met ; and the first tender glance thus exchanged united them for ever and ever !

Shachee was now the happiest woman in the universe. In her beautiful, good-natured and affectionate daughter-in-law, she found a fresh object of affection, which gave her, as it were, a new lease of life. Guests flocked to the house every day, and these being Sadhus or pious people, were entertained and feasted by Shachee, assisted by her daughter-in-law.

Nimai, though much sobered in his manner and conduct, still retained the light-heartedness which had always characterized him. "Let us go a-marketing," he would say to some of his friends and followers, and they, always feeling delight in being in his company, would, of course, assent to his proposal. Thus Nimai had scarcely ever an opportunity of being alone, as his friends seemed never to be happy unless when near him. Whenever, accompanied by his friends, he walked down one of the streets, he was soon followed by an admiring crowd. His detractors, who happened to see him on such occasions, would give vent to their spleen by ironically exclaiming, "There goes the Prince !"

Well, as Nimai was one day going to the market to make purchases, accompanied by some of his friends, one of these

reminded him that he had not taken any money with him. "That is true," said Nimai, "but the fact is, I have none." "Then you mean to purchase on credit," rejoined another. "No, not that," replied Nimai, "to take things on credit is not strictly moral, and I never do it. Let me see if I can persuade the shopkeepers to part with their wares by argument, repartee, and Brahminical blessings." Having delivered himself of this pleasantry, he laughed, and just then they arrived at the market place.

First of all they enter the shop of a weaver, who politely welcomes his customers. Nimai asks him, in his most bewitching manner, to show him a handsome Saree. The shop-keeper complies, and Nimai expresses his approval of the article, and asks what the price may be. While the shop-keeper obliges him with the information he mutters to himself, of course, loud enough for the weaver to hear, "What a silly thing for me to ask the price when I have not any money with me!"

Now the object of Nimai was only to create some amusement for himself and his companions by testing the strength of the avarice of the shop-keeper. When Nimai said that he had no money, the shopman said, "Certainly, you can have it on credit."

"That is all very good of you," said Nimai, "but I am on principle opposed to purchasing things on credit." Here the weaver had to put his avarice on one scale and the charms of Nimai on the other. He struggled but the charms of Nimai won! Said the worsted shop-man: "Sir, you are more like a god than a man. Take the Saree as an humble token of my devotion, and in return all I ask of you is your blessing." From this shop Nimai went to others, and eventually returned home with quite a load of things, which were all purchased originally by his charms alone, but were, of course, subsequently paid for.

Sreedhar, though a Brahmin, kept a stall in the market place, where he sold plantain leaves, barks, and piths. He was

extremely poor and made his living by the little business he did in these articles.

He, as a pious Vaishnava, was made a special object of attack by Nimai. Nimai enters his stall, and Sreedhar immediately assumes an attitude of defence. "Pandit, there are other stalls," says Sreedhar. "I am a poor man, and you should not annoy me." Nimai assumes the part of an injured man, and replies: "Is this the way you receive a customer? I shall pay for the things I take. But the worst of it is that you ask exorbitant prices for your very inferior articles."

In truth Sreedhar neither charged exorbitantly nor were his wares in any way inferior. But Nimai wanted simply to provoke him, and make him lose his temper if possible. Sreedhar replies: "Pandit, most men as they grow older gradually sober down. But you are growing more and more frivolous year by year." In this manner almost daily Nimai had a tussle with Sreedhar.

Sreedhar being a pious man, Nimai loved him, and this was his way of shewing it. "Do you think it proper, Sreedhar," said Nimai to him on another occasion, "that you should every day make an offering to Ganga while you offer nothing to me? Do you not know that I am the Father of Ganga?" Sreedhar was horrified at the blasphemy. He plugged his ears with his fingers. "Pandit," replied he reprovingly, "have you no respect even for Ganga?" This Sreedhar was destined to become one of Nimai's followers in later years.

CHAPTER V.

TO GYA.

NIMAI had now lost much of his unpopularity. His ever smiling face, his joyous nature, his perfect simplicity, his generosity, his loving nature, and, above all, his unrivalled intelligence and personal magnetism, which had always fascinated his friends by dozens, now won over his enemies. About this time he asked permission of his mother to repair to the holy city of Gaya, to go through a certain sacred ceremony which every good Hindu is bound to perform for the salvation of the souls of his departed dear ones.

As Nimai's object was the discharge of a pious duty, Shachee could not offer any opposition to his going, although it almost broke her heart to think of parting with her son. Gaya was three to four weeks' journey from Nadia, and the way difficult and dangerous. A good many people, however, agreed to accompany Nimai, and amongst them his mother's sister's husband, Chandra Shekhar.

So Nimai, with his friends, set out for Gaya in the month of Vadra (Sept.) of the year 1430 of the Shaka era. They journeyed slowly, and beguiled the way with intellectual and religious conversation. Nimai was evidently much affected by the nature of the pilgrimage he was undertaking, for, as was noticed by his companions, his aspect and his manner became daily more serious and grave, and inspired with spiritual thoughts those who beheld

and conversed with him. At Mandar, on the way, he had an attack of fever, the first and the last malady that ever assailed his divine person. His attendants were alarmed, for it looked as if the fever would prove obstinate, and the place was strange. At length, however, the fever abated, and they resumed the journey. This attack seemed to increase the gravity of his appearance and demeanour. His gait became slower. He engaged less and less in conversation with his comrades, and eventually he refrained altogether from speaking and gave himself up to profound thought, the nature of which those about him could not conjecture nor did they venture to inquire.

As he entered the city of Gaya, he saluted it with folded hands and with deep emotion. The sight of the holy place visibly affected him.

He proceeded at once to perform all the ceremonies usual on such an occasion. He went through them in a state of abstraction, for his mind was absorbed in meditation. At last he proceeded to witness the Foot-print of Sree Krishna in the temple, called after one of His names, Gadhadhar.

The Foot-print was there before him. Hundreds were placing flowers upon it, and hundreds other gifts. Hundreds were offering themselves unto it for ever and ever, while thousands were singing the praises of the good Lord and of His infinite mercy and goodness.

Nimai saw the Foot-print, and his gaze became rivetted hereto. He stood enthralled and motionless as a statue. His entry had created a stir, as his presence always did. The attention of every body engaged in the worship of the Foot-print was directed on him. They saw a young man of twenty-three, of herculean proportions, graceful beyond comparison, with a skin as fair as molten gold, and eyes luminous and soft as the petals of the lotus flower, with which he looked at the Foot-print with a steadfast gaze, unconscious of the presence of those

who were watching him with such intense interest. Is that a prince ? said one to himself. Is that a god in disguise ? said another. Is he Sree Krishna himself ? thought yet another.

So here is the Foot-print of Lord Sree Krishna, thought Nimai, and he was overpowered by his feelings.* This made him oblivious of the presence of others. Yet he struggled to restrain his tears, but he could not. Tears gushed out of his eyes, and by and by overflowed the lids. First one drop fell upon each of his cheeks, then another, and as his emotions deepened others followed, till, after a time, they coursed down his cheeks in continuous streams. These streams flowed from the inner angles of his eyes. But as the agitation of his soul waxed still greater, two other streams were formed, which started from the outer angles of his eyes ; and before many minutes elapsed, yet another stream from each eye started and flowed midway between the other two. From his face these streams dropped on to his chest, wetting his clothes through, and thence to the floor beneath. The spectators who witnessed the strange spectacle were hushed into silence and gazed upon the god-like figure of Nimai absorbed in the deity, as if they were spell-bound by his majestic aspect, and the pathos and sublimity of the expression which his features wore.

The floods which poured from his eyes appeared to the spectators to be supernatural, yet they flowed naturally enough. There was no contortion of the face, no sound in the throat, and no seeming effort in discharging them. Only there was a quivering of the ruddy lips. In his perfectly chiselled face beamed happiness that seemed divine, and this feeling was the source from which the torrents flowed.† It was now quite

* Worshippers of a formless God are deprived of these inestimable advantages of cultivating their bhakti.

† Tears flow either from misery or happiness. Those caused by misery produce contortions of the face. But tears produced by physical happiness.

evident to the spectators that Nimai was only partially conscious and that his limbs were about to give way under him ; but such was the reverential awe which he inspired that no one ventured just then to come to his assistance. Shortly after, as he was actually falling to the ground, one of those who were witnessing this Leela of Nimai rushed forward, and, by supporting him, prevented him from falling to the ground. This person was no other than the ever-memorable Sadhu, Iswar Puri, of whom we have already spoken.

The touch of Iswar Puri restored Nimai to semi-consciousness. He looked at the intruder and found him to be his old and revered friend, the Puri. By and by Nimai having recovered consciousness completely, addressed him thus: "I consider myself fortunate to have met you again, and more especially in this place, for the holiest shrines are rendered still more holy by the presence in them of saints and devotees like you. My eyes have this day been opened, and I find that I have been all along wading deep through the mire of ungodliness. I look to you and to the other bhaktas of God to extricate me, knowing that God exercises through you His compassion for sinners like me. To you I yield myself absolutely and entirely. Have pity on me, I pray, and grant me what is the supreme object of man in this world, namely, a glimpse, only a glimpse, of Radha's love for Krishna !"

The Puri, no less affected than Nimai, replied : "The moment that I first saw you at Nadia, you entered into my heart and you have ever since been the chief occupant thereof. I worship Radha

by excess of joy or by devotional feeling, do not produce contortions of any kind, and they make the face divinely beautiful. Tears, according to the Vaishnavas, from whatever cause they flow, purify and chasten the heart, and are one of the greatest of blessings from God to man. Tears that flow from devotional feelings have the effect of vivifying the divinity which every man has in him.

and Krishna, but whenever I invoke them, not them I see but you only in my heart. I am convinced that you are my beloved Lord who, taking pity upon His creatures here below, have come down upon earth to bless them; and if you be pleased to make use of me as an instrument in your work, be it so. Whatever you bid me do, I am bound to do with my whole heart."

They parted, and Nimai returned to his lodgings to prepare his meal. Iswari Puri however, could not keep himself away from Nimai, so he followed him and found him engaged in cooking his meal. Nimai joyfully welcomed him. Said he, "You see how lucky I am. As you finish your cooking, I come hungry." Nimai replied: "Be it so. Kindly take the rice already cooked. I will prepare another plate for myself." Iswar Puri wished to decline the offer, knowing that Nimai himself must be very hungry. But Nimai would take no refusal, and obliged his visitor to eat the meal already prepared, while he set about cooking a fresh supply for himself. On an auspicious day Iswar Puri breathed the *mantra* of initiation in the ears of Nimai. This *mantra* consisted of ten letters meaning "Salutation to the Beloved of the Gopees." When the ceremony was over, they embraced each other, and wept for joy.*

* The ceremony of initiation is of Tantric origin. The Guru or the master breathes a few mystical words in the ears of the *chela* or the disciple, and also explains to him how the necessary ceremonies are performed. The Vaishnavas adopted the above practice only to give a status to their cult. Of course, there is a great advantage in being initiated by a master; but to allow that it is essential is to assail the very basis of the Vaishnava philosophy. That philosophy has no faith in any mystery, or in the supposed influence of mystic letters upon the human mind. Vaishnavas admit that the different names given to God by His bhaktas have the power of purifying the soul when uttered with reverence. But beyond this, they admit no mysterious rites whatsoever.

It is in this manner, and usually on such occasions, that the powerful Guru or master communicates the divine influence to his *chela* or pupil.

Nimai had left, not only his levity, but his likes and dislikes behind him at Nadia. The idea that he was going to a holy shrine had led his thoughts into a quite different direction. The fever had a beneficial effect upon his soul. He entered Gaya with folded hands, in an attitude of devotion. The sight of the Foot-print of Sree Krishna completed the revolution. It caused a flow of tears which softened and expanded his heart and prepared it to receive the divine influence instilled into it by Puri. Nimai then became a man born again.

It became quite evident that a mighty wave of feeling, pent up in his heart, was convulsing him and that he was passing through a crisis. His attendants did not understand him. If they asked a question, he seemed not to hear them, or gave some irrelevant reply. He seldom spoke, and passed most of his time in a state of abstraction. There was an inexpressible pathos in his countenance, which shewed that some great sorrow weighed upon his heart. But what was it ?

Sometimes he would be seen in an attitude of deep devotion ; sometimes he would be seen gazing at something with vacant eyes, apparently unconscious of his surroundings ; sometimes he would be seen in the position of meditation, with his eyes closed ; sometimes he would look up and shew that he was expecting some body from Heaven ; sometimes he seemed to have found him whom he was expecting, and his face would brighten up with joy. He would then mutter something to this invisible being, but what he said no body could know. Sometimes, as he sat thus engrossed, tears would trickle down his cheeks ; and the expression which his face wore, would reveal the anguish that was gnawing at his heart, but the nature of which he would communicate to no one. Indeed, he endeavoured as far as possible to conceal his feelings from his attendants, and on such occasions, if one of these interrupted him, he would manifest his discomfiture by blushing exceedingly. His constant

abstraction and disregard of every worldly concern and comforts, the indelible pathos in his countenance, the silent tears which he always tried to conceal from his attendants, created the profoundest feelings of sympathy in the minds of those who watched him.

One day his attendants heard him exclaim : " Where art Thou, my Krishna, my Father ? " and attracted to where the voice had come from, discovered him lying on the ground in a swoon ! They were greatly concerned about their leader, and made many efforts to rouse him. At length regaining consciousness he endeavoured to sit up but his limbs refused to support him, whereupon he began to indulge in weeping and lamentation, muttering again and again, " My Krishna, my Father, I can not live without Thee. Until now I have tried to exist without Thy presence ; but I can do so no longer. Therefore conceal Thyself no longer from me, and save the life of Thy child." Having thus spoken he swooned away again. After a time, regaining his consciousness he resumed his lamentations in a heart-rending voice, saying, " My Lord ! my God. The world is a barren waste,—a dark wilderness without Thee ! "

His companions naturally tried to console him, but they themselves caught the contagion of his grief and began to weep with him. However Nimai was not in a mood to be consoled. His voice, his wailing, his sorrowful countenance, and the incessant flow of tears from his eyes, unnerved all who were present. The spectacle melted the heart of the stoutest amongst them.

Becoming at length somewhat composed he addressed his followers, saying : " I must ask your permission to proceed at once to Brindaban, for I can not endure the thought of returning to Navadweep until I have seen Sree Krishna, and I shall surely find him at Brindaban. There is a void in my heart, which none but Krishna can fill. Tell my mother to forgive me for not returning to her at once ; but I am no longer

independent. Krishna takes me away from her. Indeed, I cannot live without Him, and if you love me, my friends, do not restrain me." So saying he actually rose to depart ! His companions took hold of him, and it was by sheer physical force that they succeeded in keeping him in his place. Chandra Shekhar and the other friends of Nimai found themselves in an exceedingly difficult position. Shachee had entrusted her beloved son to their care with injunctions to bear back her treasure to her. But Nimai was not the man to be controlled by ordinary persuasion. Nevertheless owing to some sudden influence exercised upon him from within, it pleased Nimai to agree to return with his friends, and very shortly after they set out on their homeward journey, returning faster than they had gone. Nimai remained all the way in a state of almost complete abstraction.

CHAPTER VI.

BACK TO NADIA.

It came to be known in Nadia that Nimai was coming home. His mother joyfully came out of the house into the public streets to receive him. Vishnupriya, impatient to see her lord, bashfully stood behind the folds of the door to have a look at him. Mother and son met, and Nimai reverentially prostrated himself before her. The news soon spread all over the town that Nimai had returned safe and sound, and his father-in-law, Sanatan, and his mother-in-law heard the news with joy.

Neighbours, friends, relations and pupils came to congratulate him. They were, however, amazed to see that he was no longer the same individual that they had seen before. His former mirthful countenance was now seen to be overcast with melancholy,—a melancholy which seemed to have its source in some sort of ecstacy. His aggressive spirit had disappeared and left him the meekest of men in the world. His attitude was so submissive as to suggest that he felt himself to be under deep obligations to all those who had come to see him. It was clear that some mighty emotion was working in his heart, and that he was ceaselessly struggling to restrain the tears which poured involuntarily from his eyes, reddened by frequent flows.

Externally he was Nimai, no doubt, but his mind seemed to have undergone a thorough metamorphosis. Was he a spiritual

being, or a man made of flesh and blood ? There was a spiritual lustre about him such as poets imagine but rarely see. He bowed to his elders with great reverence ; to his friends he was deferential ; to his inferiors, amiable ; and to his pupils, affectionate. All those who came in contact with him were now more than ever fascinated by the irresistible attractiveness of his person and manners. There was one, however, who was not pleased at the change : it was his mother Shachee.

Something within persuaded her to believe that her son was not actually in his normal state. With her motherly affection she perceived that her son was under the influence of something which made him indifferent to everything around him. What Shachee would have liked to see was that her son, like other young men, would interest himself in the affairs of the world, and enjoy all its legitimate pleasures. As a young man he ought to have liked good meals, good dresses, and the company of his wife and friends. But he seemed to care for nothing or nobody in the world. Shachee could not draw him out from his abstraction even for a private talk. Sometimes she even suspected that the real Nimai had fled from her and that somebody else had taken possession of the body of her son. There was nothing in the attitude of Nimai towards herself to offend her ; indeed, it seemed to her that her son had become still more affectionate in his regards for her ; but she was alarmed to find that she could not entertain for her son the same feeling of ownership and treat him with the same familiarity as before. At length Nimai took leave of those who had come to welcome him and entered into the inner apartments with his mother.

In the afternoon, Murari, the young physician, Sadashiva and Sreeman came to Nimai as they had been requested by the latter to do, to hear a secret which he had promised to tell them. They all four sat in the outer part of the house, and Nimai, at their request, began to relate the adventures that he

had met with in his pilgrimage to Gaya. He did this with his usual eloquence and unrivalled powers of conversation. His voice was always musical, and his ordinary language was always poetry, interspersed with bright and sparkling gems of thought and imagination. His companions listened to him with rapt attention. Then he began his description of the temple of Gadadhar. Nimai said : "The priests in charge of the Temple showed me the Foot-print of Sree Krishna, the Lord of the universe, and I gazed at it—." Here Nimai suddenly stopped.

Murari and others looked up to see what was the matter with him. They saw that Nimai's staring and motionless eyes had lost all expression. They wanted to rouse him from what they considered to be merely a reverie, but they soon discovered that he had hopelessly swooned away and was about to fall. Immediately afterwards he fell over, as if he were dead !

This was a strange experience to them all. Murari, himself a physician, adopted all the means he knew of to bring Nimai back to consciousness, and at last succeeded ; or rather Nimai recovered consciousness of his own accord. He sat up and struggled hard to say something, but could not, and fell down again, trying to utter the name of Krishna in the midst of his sobs. It was clear that Krishna had something to do with his sorrow, and that he was struggling to say something about Him. At last he managed to say a few words to the effect that the great sorrow of his life remained stuck in his heart like an arrow, and this, for want of more expressive words, he emphasized by touching his heart with his fingers. Said he again, in half-uttered accents, "My dear friends, to whom shall I pour out the sorrows of my heart ?" And finally he managed to make a proposal.

"To-morrow morning," said he, "I will tell you all, if you will kindly meet me at the house of Shuklambar." This house was situated on the bank of the Ganges, not very far from

the house of Shachee. They, of course, all agreed to the proposal.

Nimai, in going to speak of the Foot-print, had fainted away, because the idea of the Foot-print of God Almighty caused a commotion in his heart ; it produced, as it were, a current, and that current, finding no outlet, stuck in his throat, and he fainted away. Nimai's heart was, after the fainting, relieved by a copious flow of tears from eyes which have been likened to a couple of syringes. These tears drenched the body and clothes of himself and his friends, and "wetted the flower garden close by."

Murari and others had never before seen such a spectacle. Men are sometimes overpowered by feeling ; but can the feeling of a man, under any circumstances, be so strong? Can a man die of feeling ? Nimai was all but dead when he fell down in a swoon. Can a man shed tears enough to be able to wet the earth as is done by a shower ? Bhakti is a powerful feeling, no doubt ; but can it be more potent than all others which move the human heart ? Is it possible for men to feel so much attraction for God ? Seeing the feeling of Nimai they realized that there must be a God ; for, a mere nothing could never have roused such deep feeling in a man. They further thought that God was bound to be attracted by such bhakti as Nimai evinced !

The three began to whisper to one another. Said Murari : "who would have thought a month ago that Nimai would turn out such a profound bhakta?" When Nimai had sufficiently recovered to take care of himself, they left him to the care of his mother.

When night came, Nimai retired to his bed-room. Vishnupriya came soon after, with flowers and scents in her hands, to meet her lord. He had, by mighty efforts, restrained his feelings so long. But when his beloved wife came to him, he could restrain his tears no longer, and they began to flow silently down his cheeks.

The feeling of the poor girl can better be imagined than described. She had come to welcome her husband, who had been absent for upwards of three months from home. But lo ! her husband was receiving her literally with a flood of tears ! She had then not the least idea why her lord was shedding tears.

The heart naturally melts at the sight of distress. Women are very much affected when they see men weeping. Fancy the condition of Vishnupriya, who was not only a woman but a wife ! She hastily ran to Shachee crying, "Mother, mother, come and see." Shachee, not knowing what the matter was, and understanding that her daughter-in-law was in an anxious state of mind, ran to Nimai's room. Shachee found Nimai weeping silently. As her presence remained unnoticed by him, the old lady tried to rouse her son. She placed her hand on his head and asked, "What ails thee, my son?" But Shachee's voice had no effect upon Nimai. Shachee again asked, and this time more loudly, in these words : "My son, your condition breaks my heart. What is the matter with you ?" After repeated efforts, Shachee succeeded in making herself heard. The result, however, was that Nimai was not soothed, but the flood-gates of his heart were, as it were, laid open by the question of his mother. If Vishnupriya's presence had increased the flow of tears, his mother's query gave a further impetus to it.

At last, after great efforts, Nimai succeeded, amidst sobs, in replying to her. Said he : "Mother, do not be alarmed. I had gone to bed and was sleeping when I saw a dream in which a most beautiful Being appeared to me, and since then I feel myself unable to restrain my tears." From his description it became evident to Shachee and her daughter-in-law that this Being was no other than Sree Krishna. Then he began to describe the beauty of Sree Krishna as if to himself. In this occupation, by which both Shachee and Vishnupriya found themselves enthralled, the first night of Nimai was passed !

Early on the following morning, Sreeman repaired with many others, as was usual with them, to gather flowers for worship, from a Kunda bush that grew in Pandit Sreebas' garden. Sreeman had passed the night in great joy. The spectacle that he had witnessed of Nimai in an ecstatic swoon, had created a revolution in his mind. It had impressed him with the truth that God Himself must be very good to be able to inspire man with so much regard for Him. The misery of man proceeds from unbelief in God or from an erroneous idea of the nature of God. Sreeman unconsciously imbibed the idea, from what he had seen in Nimai, that God and man were very nearly and dearly related to each other. He had thus been able to spurn all idea of misery from his mind, and to pass a really happy night, the first in his life, and he now appeared before his friends and neighbours with a face beaming with happiness. His changed countenance was marked by all. Sreebas inquired of him the reason for this happy change. "You seem to be very happy," enquired he. Sreeman replied: "Yes, I have good reason to be so." "What is that?" asked Sreebas. Now Sreeman himself was anxious to tell everybody what he had seen the previous evening. So he told those who had assembled to pluck flowers all that he had witnessed. He thus concluded: "From what I saw of Nimai Pandit, it seemed to me that he was something more than human. To see is to believe. It is not possible to describe what I saw."

Every one was glad to hear this, especially Sreebas, the friend of Nimai's father. Pious Sreebas had always prayed to Sree Krishna to lead Nimai to His bosom. His great wish was now satisfied, and he ejaculated, "Let God Sree Krishna multiply our family."

Now, it must be borne in mind that one of the most ardent wishes of the Vaishnavas, followers of Sree Krishna and Sree Gouranga, is to see the Kingdom of the beloved Lord extended.

And why? It is because men libel God Almighty by their attempts to please Him. All their so-called praise of Him indirectly means that He is a wrathful, revengeful and weak-minded tyrant. The Vaishnavas know that He is infinite times better than that, and they want to proclaim this to the world. The reader will know by and by what we mean by the statement that God is being libelled by His creatures. Sreeman continued: "We three, that is, Murari, Sadashiva and I, have been asked by Nimai to repair this morning to the hut of Shuklambar, the ascetic, where he has promised to tell us of the sorrows that are eating into his heart. I am going there direct." Saying this, he left the place.

Gadadhar, who was present, also wanted to go. But he had not been invited by Nimai; so he went to the house of Shuklambar, and concealed himself there. Soon afterwards the other two, Murari and Sadashiva, came; and they, with Sreeman, sat in the outer part of the house, while Gadadhar remained concealed within the inner room, expecting Nimai.

They saw Nimai coming. A tall young man in blooming health, of immense physical strength, he was seen to totter at each step. It appeared to them from some distance that the external world had almost disappeared from his view, and that he was feeling his way towards them. He came with the unsteady step of a drunken man. Slowly he ascended the steps, and seeing his friends there, stopped as if to speak. But their sight gave a further impulse to his feelings which overcame him, and while ejaculating "My Krishna," with a shriek he lost his balance. He instinctively clutched one of the wooden posts which supported the roof; but it broke with his weight, and with it he fell flat on the verandah floor. His three friends hastily rose to offer him help. But what did they see? They saw that his eyes were half-closed and fixed; that the pupils had almost disappeared behind the upper lids; that he had almost ceased to breathe: and that his jaws were locked immovably,

while froth appeared between his lips.* Murari, the physician, was alarmed, because Nimai now seemed to have actually stopped breathing. They all began to take energetic steps to rouse him. They loudly called him by his name, sprinkled water on his face, and shook him violently.

After a time Nimai, by these means, was brought back to consciousness. He tearfully looked at his attendants with a countenance which betokened unutterable sorrow, and endeavoured to speak, but could not. He touched his breast and informed them by signs that "Krishna is not here ; He has fled." When the power of speech returned to him, he began to lament, and in heart-rending accents delivered himself thus : "I captured my Krishna ; but He has escaped me. There is a void in my heart and the whole world cannot fill it. It is all emptiness and gloom. Where is He ? Can no friend bring Him back to me ?" And in the agony of his distress, he began to roll on the dusty floor like "one stung by a thousand scorpions."

After a while he rose and sat up, his gold-hued body and dishevelled hair covered with dust, and his eyes red from incessant weeping. There was such an inexpressible pathos in his accents and such indescribable misery depicted in his face, that those who attended him felt as if their hearts were bursting with grief. Nimai endeavoured once more to speak, but his voice died in his throat, and he fell down again, a senseless mass !

Thus he continued to fall and rise. When he wanted to speak out his secret, his consciousness again gave way ; and when again he recovered from his trance he again made a

* The condition of a man in a state of trance under the influence of Bhakti is very much like that of one stricken down by epilepsy ; only the sight of an epileptic creates unpleasant feelings, and that of a pious man, in a trance, elevates the soul and imparts joy to those who behold him.

further attempt to disclose his secret. Thus hours glided away, and so engrossed were they all that they forgot that the day was passing away. If Nimai wept incessantly, so did his attendants. He at last saw that it would be impossible for him to tell his secret in the then state of his mind, and so he desisted.

It was nearing evening, and Nimai was getting calm and recovering the possession of his senses. He then heard sobs in the house, which he was not in a position to hear before. "Who is he?" asks Nimai. They tell him it is Gadadhar. "Gadadhar? Is it Gadadhar?" says Nimai. "Yes, Gadadhar, thou art a lucky man, thou hast spent thy days in devotion, while I have frittered them away in vain pursuits." Hearing this, Gadadhar came from his hiding-place and fell at the feet of Nimai. Gadadhar then said in faltering accents, "You know I am your slave, for ever and ever."

They all conducted Nimai home, a little before evening; and Shachee washed him, and induced him to break his fast. They had all fasted the whole day. Thus, the second attempt of Nimai to tell his secret failed.

In the presence of company and mere acquaintances not very closely connected, Nimai tried to repress the strange influence working within him, by every means in his power. Before such people he tried his best to conceal "the arrow stuck in his breast." Yet it was simply impossible for him to conceal the fact that he had become a totally changed man. After coming from Gaya, he was in duty bound to repair to the house of those who were his elders, for the purpose of saluting them. Nimai went for that purpose to Gangadas, his preceptor. The famous grammarian received him with open arms and spoke to him in paternal terms. Said he: "It is well that you have come back from Gaya. Your pupils are disconsolate without you. Their resolve is to be taught by yourself and none else. They are doing nothing in your absence, and perhaps are

forgetting what they had learnt. Open your tole at once. It is necessary for the sake of your students, and for the matter of that, for your own sake, Nimai ; for, if you continue to neglect your old habits of study, you will forget most of what you have learnt."

Early the following morning Nimai opened his tole and his pupils appeared one by one. He had come to the tole purely from habit ; for, on his way thither, he managed to forget not only whither and for what purpose he was going, but even himself. He sat in the midst of his pupils, absorbed in his own thoughts. The pupils, as is the custom, opened their books with the ejaculation of "Hari", "Hari." The sound entered into the ears of Nimai, and he immediately fell into a state of mental abstraction. He did not fall down, but became almost entirely oblivious of every body and every thing about him.

It was soon evident to the students that their preceptor was beside himself, for he commenced addressing them thus : "How sweet the word Hari is." He proceeded on, in this manner, discoursing on the merits of Hari for several hours together. He explained to them that God was great and good ; that the object of existence was the attainment of His lotus feet ; and he said many other things besides. His pupils heard him with rapt attention. But when it was getting on to noon, Nimai suddenly regained his senses. He then recollected that he was Nimai pandit, who had come to teach his pupils, and not to preach a sermon. This discovery led him to hang down his head in shame !

He slowly addressed the students thus : "It is late, let us now go home. As we have re-opened the tole to-day, it is well that we have passed it in discoursing about divine matters."

This explanation seemed very natural to the students ; for, it is customary with the Hindus never to begin a work without first offering thanks to God.

On the following morning Nimai again attended the tole. He came with the determination to teach, and to suppress the feelings that might arise in his heart. Unluckily for him, these got the better of him again ; and he began, as on the previous day, to talk of Hari, His goodness, and so on. Now, as a matter of fact, the sermons of Nimai did not create any feeling of disgust, nor give rise to any ridicule in the hearts of his pupils. For when Nimai spoke, his voice sounded sweeter than celestial music, his ideas sparkled like gems ; and his thoughts not only carried conviction, but soothed the soul. The students who had never given much thought to spiritual matters, moreover, succeeded in gleaning many facts important to them from the sermons. They discovered that the command which their pandit had over the Sanskrit language was superhuman, that he was a poet of the highest order and a philosopher who was absolute master of his ideas. Nimai was startled to find that on this day also he had preached a sermon, instead of imparting education. Again he felt humiliated, and promised in his own mind to give more attention to his duties the next day.

The morrow came, and precisely the same thing happened. The students did not know what to make of their preceptor. They saw that he was as powerful, competent and kind as ever, or rather that he exhibited these qualities in a higher degree than he had ever done before. But they could make no progress in their studies. They had been able to make no progress during the months their preceptor had spent on his pilgrimage. They had determined to make up for the lost time by extra efforts when he should return. Their preceptor had come back and yet they felt that they were doing nothing.

The grown-up pupils, therefore, waited in deputation upon Pandit Gangadas, the preceptor of their preceptor, and told him all their sorrows. They told him that their preceptor, since his return from Gaya, had taught them nothing, but had

devoted all the hours set apart for education to discourses about Sree Krishna and His goodness !

Gangadas was pained to hear such an account of Nimai, from whom he had expected much. He smiled, however, at the spectacle that was presented to his mind of young Nimai, that boastful and aggressive scholar, suddenly converted into a saint and religious teacher ! He suggested to the students that they should bring Nimai to him on the following day, when he would direct him to pay more attention to his educational duties.

On the following afternoon, Nimai, accompanied by his pupils, came to pay his respects to Gangadas, and saluted him with great humility. Gangadas blessed him with the words, "Be you a learned man," and then began to admonish him. He reminded him that he was the son of a pandit and himself a pandit of renown, whose great learning and success as a teacher had more than repaid him (Gangadas) for the pains he had taken to educate him. "But," continued he, "I am told, Nimai, that you now devote all your energy and abilities to the cause of religion, that you have become a saint, and are alike neglectful of your own studies and of the intellectual progress of those committed to your charge. No one could be better pleased than I am to learn that you have bowed your haughty head to the mild yoke of religion. But your uncommon abilities mark you out for a great future as a Professor ; and while I would on no account ask you to become less ardent in your religious faith, I implore you for the sake of the young men who attend your tole for secular instruction and who are ardently attached to you, to devote your energies and abilities to their advancement. Your pupils are determined never to go elsewhere, nor do they get their instruction at yours. "

Nimai blushed with conscious guilt. He stammered out an apology and promised to pay more attention in future to his

educational work. Indeed, Nimai was now in complete possession of himself, having, for the time being, fully extricated himself from the influence which had almost continuously kept him under its bondage, by coming thus in contact with his intellectual preceptor; and he returned with his pupils, like the Nimai of old, entertaining them on the way with brilliant discourses, literary and philosophical. That evening they all assembled at the house of Ratnagarbha, a Brahmin belonging not only to Sylhet, but hailing from the very village where Nimai's father, Jagannath, was born.

There Nimai sat surrounded by his pupils, whom, as of old, he kept deeply engrossed with his intellectual conversation. His pupils, seeing that their preceptor was at last teaching them in his old style, were delighted, and listened to him with rapt attention. But alas! for poor Nimai! Ratnagarbha was performing his evening devotions in his pooja-house, and as a part of which he recited loudly and feelingly a sloka from the Sreemad Bhagabat, describing Sree Krishna. The sound and sense of the sloka entered the ears of Nimai, and all his intellectual activity evaporated; and, like a bird shot from a tree, he fell flat on the floor ejaculating "My Krishna!" in a state of complete trance!

Says Radha to her maids: "You advised me never to go to the Jamuna to bathe, lest I fell a victim to the bewitching beauty of Sree Krishna, Who lies in wait under a Kadamba tree to steal the hearts of simple-minded maids,—maids who resort to that river to wash themselves. Conscious of my own strength to resist Him, I disregarded your advice. But alas! alas! He has not only taken possession of me, but everything that belongs to me, even my individuality; and now wherever I cast my glance, I see nothing but Sree Krishna!" Thus Nimai had left his preceptor with the resolution never to allow Sree Krishna to approach his heart again; but alas! a sloka about Him from Ratnagarbha washed away.

all his resolution. And thus highly intellectual and learned men laugh at the so-called follies of the bhaktas, who believe in a good and lovely God ; but if a ray of bhakti by any means enters their hearts, all their so-called learning and wisdom are driven out of their mind, like mists before the rising sun. The proud savant, Sharbabhauma, had, in this manner, laughed at the so-called frolics of the Lord Nimai ; but when converted, he composed the famous couplet which means, "let wise men laugh at us ; but let us, in the meanwhile, drink the bhakti of Hari and dance and roll in the dust in the excess of our joy."

Now this was the first occasion on which Nimai had become affected in this way in public, and his pupils knew not what to do. Luckily, however, Gadadhar was present. Gadadhar had seen Nimai in a similar trance before and consequently knew what should be done in order to revive him. After a long interval Nimai regained consciousness ; but the moment he did so he called out to Ratnagarbha to repeat the sloka. Ratnagarbha having complied, Nimai again fell down in a deep trance. His condition not only excited wonder, but touched the heart of every one present. They all felt themselves irresistibly attracted towards God, and tears of divine joy ran down their cheeks. Passers-by, seeing the scene before them, were riveted to the spot and similarly affected. Nimai recovered in the meantime and again exclaimed : "Repeat the sloka," "Repeat the sloka." Ratnagarbha again repeated it and again Nimai found himself unable to control himself !

Gadadhar loved Nimai more dearly than he did his own life. He was therefore extremely pained to see his friend rolling on the ground, his gold-hued body besmeared with dust and tears coming from his eyes as water does from a syringe. So when Nimai again demanded of Ratnagarbha to repeat the sloka, Gadadhar requested him not to do so, and he desisted.

In the midst of these doings, Nimai found an opportunity of rising and embracing Ratnagarbha. And the result was that the latter was immediately overpowered by bhakti for God, and converted into a new man,—a man born again. From that moment he became Nimai's for ever and ever. Those present now managed, after great efforts, to lead Nimai to the Ganges, for the purpose of bathing him ; and having thence brought him home safe and sound, they left him there to the care of his mother, and departed.

On the following morning Nimai found himself in his tole, surrounded by his pupils. He seemed to his students to be a being higher than they. He looked divine in every way. From every part of his body shot forth the effulgence of holiness ; his large eyes showed unutterable love for all ; and his calm and chastened face gave evidence of unfathomable wisdom. Nimai was absorbed in his own thoughts ; but they gazed at him with awe, mingled with extreme tenderness. What they had seen the previous evening had created a thorough revolution in their minds. They felt convinced that their preceptor was more than human. Nimai was about to speak under the influence that had overpowered him on previous days ; but he succeeded in conquering it, though not without a great effort, and then he beckoned to his pupils to come near him.

They came, and Nimai addressed them slowly and deliberately, and every word he uttered breathed the profoundest pathos. Said he : "Tell me, my friends, frankly, is it not the fact that you are now getting no help from me in your studies ?" They remained silent with bent heads. "Yes," continued Nimai, "I feel that you are getting no help from me. Tell me, please, what I do ?" Nimai was perfectly self-collected. He continued, "Tell me, friends, how I behave when I come here."

One of the students replied deferentially : "Pandit, it is only too true that you do not now give us any instruction. You speak only of Sree Krishna. What you say is all true and good, and none of us doubts that the attainment of God is the goal of human life. But to listen to such discourses, however valuable in themselves, is not the object for which we students attend your tole."

Nimai thought for a moment, and replied : "Yes, I seem to remember faintly that I speak to you of Sree Krishna and not of your lessons."

Another student now intervened and remarked : "Pandit, since your return from Gaya, you have never addressed one word to us about our studies. Last night you fainted away on hearing a sloka recited. You probably do not remember any thing about it ; but we, who witnessed the scene, were deeply impressed by your behaviour which clearly proved to us that of all human beings on earth, you are the most attached and favoured disciple of Sree Krishna."

Nimai gazed at the student who thus addressed him, while tears returned to his eyes. He replied with inexpressible pathos in his voice : "Yes, I have come to understand that you are getting no assistance from me. I have tried my utmost to direct my attention to your studies, but I have failed. Is it possible that my old malady, the insanity, has again taken possession of me ?" This last sentence Nimai addressed more to himself than to the students.

"No, that cannot be," they replied as with one voice. "When you speak, sparkling gems fall from your lips. Your mastery over the subtlest ideas is marvellous. Your speech enthral us and fills us with ecstasy. Your bhakti to God is beyond conception. No, sir, it can never be insanity." When they had spoken, Nimai resumed : "My friends, I will deal frankly with you, and reveal to you a secret which should

not be told to others. It is this: When I am about to teach you, at that moment a child of dark complexion and of exquisite beauty appears before me, playing on his flute. The sight of him takes away my senses." As he spoke, the image of the beautiful boy appeared before his mind's eye, with the result that he was about to fall into a trance! But by a great effort of the will he recovered himself, though it took him some time to recover from the effects of the influence. He thus concluded mournfully: "Therefore, my dear friends, teaching you is now out of my power. Nothing but Sree Krishna and matters concerning Him come into my mind; my senses and my whole being have been taken entire possession of by Him. So, dear friends, allow me to take leave of you. I freely give you leave to go wherever you choose for your education, and may the blessings of Sree Krishna always attend you! Forget me not as I shall never be able to forget you." So saying, he looked tenderly at his students, and the professor of twenty-three burst into tears!

The pathos in Nimai's voice, his sentiments and sorrowful countenance, had a most powerful effect upon his students; and they too all burst into tears. They sobbed and wept, and could not utter a word in reply for some time. Said one at length, speaking for his fellow-students as well as himself: "Here, then, our education ends—our dearly-loved education. Think not, Pandit, that we can transfer ourselves to another professor; and even if we wished to do so, where should we find one so tender and so affectionate as you? We bid farewell then to education! Bless us, preceptor, that we may not forget what we have learnt at your feet." Nimai was visibly affected. He could not speak, but beckoned his pupils to come nearer. They came, and he caught hold of the nearest, placed him on his lap, smelt his head and kissed him. This done, he left him, and took another, and so on. They then all wept in a body.

It now devolved on Nimai to console his pupils, though himself inconsolable. He restrained his feelings as far as he could and, said in a low tone: "Friends, if we are to part, let us part with a Krishna-Kirtan. Soothe my heart by singing one. Oblige me thus; and if I ever have been of any service to you, let this be its adequate return."

The students were then precisely in the state of mind which welcomes a pious demonstration in order to give vent to their surcharged hearts. So they eagerly exclaimed! "We will willingly do so, but what is Krishna-Kirtan? Kindly explain it to us and teach us how to sing it."

Nimai said: "Let us sing in praise of that Being, who is so good, so merciful, so loving." He sat in the middle, a picture of bhakti personified, while his students surrounded him. Keeping time with his hands, he began with his sonorous voice to sing, "Salutation to Krishna, salutation to Hari." As he began, he was filled with bhakti, and tears of joy poured from his eyes in floods. His tone, his look, nay, every movement of his limbs, imparted bhakti to the students, and they found themselves overpowered by it. The pathetic incident of leave-taking had softened their hearts, and the bhakti which now flowed from the preceptor found a welcome reception there. They joined in the song one by one, and soon found themselves drawn into the middle of the current. Gradually the external world began to grow dim and dimmer to their gaze,—a holy joy filled their hearts. Some wept, though they shed only tears of joy. Some laughed, some trembled, some rolled on the ground, and some danced in the exuberance of their feelings. The commotion in the tole brought many spectators to the scene. They came as idle starers, but they too found themselves caught in the current. They all prostrated themselves before the preceptor who was then, as it were, "swimming in the river of bhakti."

What Nimai was doing, need not be described here. We shall have many occasions to do it. But what happened was this. Both the preceptor and the students were in a tender mood then. The song which they were learning from Nimai, opened the flood-gates of their surcharged hearts. The influence of bhakti upon their hearts gave a new turn to their feelings ; and they, for the first time, learnt that it was altogether a pleasure to serve God. It then appeared to them that they had been fools to forget God and live the life of animals ; that God was good and loving ; and that they were bound to Him by indissoluble ties of love,—that He was the fountain of bliss, and that the whole universe was the expression of joy as it emanated from Him.

The joy that bhakti gives can be felt, but never adequately described by the puny wit of man. It was on that day thus that the truth was first revealed by Lord Gauranga that it was not by austerities and mortifications that the companionship of God could be attained. Of course, by austerities men may possibly benefit themselves in many ways ; but the companionship of God is a quite different thing. The bhakta does not serve God as a light or a force, but as an everlasting companion, in whom all the yearnings of the heart find their fulfilment. Says Vasudeva, one of the chroniclers of Nimai's sayings and doings : "My Lord Gauranga is like unto the philosopher's stone. My Lord converted the worst of sinners who were as black and as hard as iron, and made them as pure and soft as molten gold, not by subjecting them to fire (austerities) but by making them dance and sing in praise of God by His mere touch." It was then that the first Krishna-Kirtan was chanted by Gauranga for the salvation of man. The original song still exists ; and while it has lost much of the force with which it was originally charged when first revealed, it is still sung by Vaishnavas and has force enough to make

the bhakta, who recites it, beside himself with the fervour of the emotions it produces in him. Many of the pupils of Nimai from that day gave up society, and dedicated themselves to the Lotus Feet of God. Thus ended the early Leela of Nimai,—the period of his intellectual culture.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ENVY OF RIVALS.

SHACHEE knew not what to make of her son. He would not bathe unless forced ; he would not eat unless made to do so. He seemed always absorbed in his own thoughts, and oftentimes perfectly unconscious. Tears never ceased to roll down his cheeks, and he was always in an attitude of devotion. If he spoke, he spoke of Krishna ; and if, for some moments, he regained his natural state and talked like other beings, he did not retain it long. He rarely saw company, outsiders never willingly. If they came across him, he tried to restrain his over-charged feelings, sometimes successfully and sometimes unsuccessfully. His friends, Gadadhar and others, always kept guard over him, in order that others might not annoy him in any way, or that Nimai might not, in a fit of religious ecstasy, do any mischief to himself.

His rival professors again circulated the rumour that Nimai Pandit had been for a second time overtaken by his old malady, *i. e.*, insanity. And they did more ; they forced themselves into Shachee's presence and began to frighten that simple-minded lady. They told her that she should take prompt steps for the recovery of her son who had become a hopeless maniac, and that he should be tied to a post, given only cold and liquid diet and kept immersed in water day and night. Of course, Shachee was frightened ; but what could she do ? She could not consult her son. Indeed, she had ventured once or twice to sound him about the cause of his malady, and the only reply

that she had got from him was that he knew that he was beside himself and that his attitude pained her, and that it was his duty, for her sake, to endeavour to restrain himself. But although he had done his best, he had not been able to shake off the influence that dominated him or to restrain his tears.

In despair, Shachee sent for Sreebas, the friend of Nimai's father, whom we have already spoken of. Why Sreebas had not come to see Nimai before, is not known ; perhaps he was not at home. But when he heard from Shachee about the state of Nimai's health, he hastened to see what the matter was with her son. He saw Nimai in a state of the deepest possible devotion, his cheeks wet with tears and his eyes red with constant weeping.

When Nimai perceived the approach of Sreebas, he rose to salute him. At one time Sreebas had been an object of fun and ridicule to him as every Vaishnava bhakta was. But now the sight of a bhakta gave an ungovernable impulse to his devotional feelings. As he rose to salute Sreebas, he fell down in a swoon ! The trance was not, however, a very deep one, and Nimai was soon restored to his senses.

Sreebas saw with wonder the condition of Nimai. From the moment he came there, he had been watching Nimai with the greatest attention and curiosity. He saw that symptoms which attend the ecstasy of a pious man of the foremost rank, as described in religious books, were present in the case of Nimai. Nay, he saw more. He saw symptoms in Nimai which had not been noted by any of the saintly writers, who had dealt with the subject. Indeed, the bhakti which he saw displayed by Nimai, appeared to him something supernatural.

Nimai knew that some people had said that he was mad, and that his mother had been advised to treat him as a lunatic. Indeed, he knew why his mother had gone to Sreebas, and why Sreebas had come to him. So having composed himself, he asked Sreebas to tell him frankly what he thought of his condition. He

said : "It is well, Pandit, that you have come. You were a friend of my father and are a servant of Krishna. People tell my mother that I have been again overtaken by my old malady, insanity. As for my opinion of the matter, all that I can say is, that I cannot restrain my tears."

Sreebas smiled, and then looking at Shachee, addressed her thus: "Why do you listen to what these silly people say? Your son has attained to Krishna-prem, the highest blessing of God to man. How is it possible for the irreligious to understand these celestial matters? Banish all anxiety from your heart on account of your son. I warrant you, your son will do wonders. Such marvellous bhakti means that God is coming or come."

Nimai gratefully looked at Sreebas and said, "People have called my condition madness, and if you were of the same opinion, I would immediately go and drown myself in the Ganges, and thereby put an end to my miserable existence; but as you have given hope, allow me to embrace you in return." So saying, Nimai clasped Sreebas to his breast.

A thrill of pleasure immediately passed through the entire frame of Sreebas, and it took him some time to recover from the emotion. He then slowly remarked, "People call it madness, do they? I wish you could oblige me by sharing with me some of your so-called insanity, even an infinitesimal portion of it, for I should then consider myself the most fortunate man in the universe. We have nothing to do with what those silly people say. Come to my house every night and we shall pass our time in worshipping Krishna."

Nimai agreed. Shachee no doubt felt somewhat reassured by what she had just heard from Sreebas; but yet she had not forgotten the wound that Vishvarup, her eldest son, had left in her heart, and she trembled to think that this love for Krishna might also take her only son Nimai away from home, and convert him into an ascetic like his elder brother.

CHAPTER VIII.

HIS MORNING ROUTINE.

SREEBAS had three brothers. All the four brothers messed together, though each had a separate house in the same compound, enclosed within strong and high walls. Besides the four houses, Sreebas had a small one where he performed his worship. In this house he kept an Image of God, made of stone, which he worshipped daily. The intimate friends of Nimai came to know that he had agreed to come to Sreebas's house, and spend some time there every night in devotional exercises. Thus Murari, Gadadhar, Mukunda, the famous singer of whom we have spoken before, and others came to attend the meetings.

Something must be said here as to how Nimai passed his days. In the presence of his friends he did not make any effort to check the manifestation of the so-called malady that had overtaken him. But before outsiders he tried to restrain his feelings. Early in the morning he went to the Ganges to perform his ablutions ; and Gadadhar and a few other intimate friends always accompanied him. If on these occasions he saw any one with whom he was not intimate, he avoided him carefully unless he was some pious man, in which case he would bow to him and even prostrate himself at his feet, trying all the while to suppress an outburst of feeling. "What is it you are doing, Pandit?"—was the general exclamation of those to whom he thus bowed. This was not to be wondered at, considering that

in that city of learning Nimai was deemed its literary king. In such a case, a momentary surprise, mixed with confusion, gave way to compassion at the sight of Nimai's extraordinary humility. Sometimes they were moved to tears. In fact, Nimai, in his heart of hearts, felt himself "meaner than grass;" and, therefore, he was led by an inward impulse, to fall at the feet of any person who had the reputation of being a bhakta. Sometimes he would take the basket of flowers from a bhakta proceeding to perform his worship at the river and carry it for him, or the clothes to be put on by him after bathing, or he would wring out the water from his wet garments after he had bathed.

The persons thus honoured were abashed by these humble attentions paid to them by such a superior man, and invariably entreated Nimai not to give himself such trouble. Nimai as invariably replied to this effect: "I have heard that Krishna vouchsafes His grace to him who serves a pious man. Why, then, would you deprive me of such a simple and agreeable way of winning His favour?" Humility softens the heart of those who witness it, especially when it is shewn by a great personage. One may therefore easily perceive the mighty effect of Nimai's uncommon humility upon those whom he thus served and those who witnessed the service. Every pious man, who chanced to meet Nimai, would greet him with the blessing, "May Krishna grant you His grace!" Nimai on such occasions would reply: "Since you, His bhaktas, are so kind to me, Krishna no doubt will bless me."

Nimai's unparalleled humility surprised and moved not only the bhaktas, but even men of the world. He soon became the topic of conversation in many circles. Among those learned men whose fame had been eclipsed by that of Nimai, there were some who spoke of him spitefully. But no one who had once seen him and observed his simplicity, humility, earnestness, piety

and the pathetic expression of his countenance, however jealous he might be of Nimai's reputation, could any longer bear an ill-will towards him. His countenance shewed him to be utterly without guile. He looked the avatar of simplicity, honesty and sweetness.

Pious Vaishnavas, very glad at heart, went in a body to Advaita to convey to him the tidings of Nimai's extraordinary piety. He was, as we have said, the head of the Vaishnava community of Nadia. At his house the Vaishnavas were accustomed to hold meetings at which Vaishnava books were read, conversations about Krishna held, and hymns chanted. At one of these meetings, a Vaishnava announced that Nimai Pandit, who, having overcome the most learned men, had declared himself matchless in the world of learning and scoffed at religion, was now become the humblest of men ; while so deep were his feelings of devotion that he seemed more than mortal.

This information visibly affected Advaita. He said : "I have always noticed something remarkable in Nimai. When a child of four or five he often came here, at the bidding of his mother, to fetch his elder brother, Vishvarup, home. He then attracted my attention. As a humble servant of Sree Krishna I was not likely to be captivated by the mere physical beauty which undoubtedly the child possessed ; but there was a spiritual light in his eye, and a heavenly sweetness in his expression, such as I had never observed in any child before and which caused me to ask myself : 'Who and what may he be ?' I have often repeated the question since ; but not until last night was an explanation vouchsafed to me. It came in this wise :

"Not understanding a passage of the *Bhagbat Geeta*, whose literal meaning seemed opposed to all our pre-conceived notions, I had fasted and prayed to Sree Krishna to enlighten me and

remove my doubts.* Well, having gone to sleep last night, I dreamt that some one was calling me by name. The Being said : 'Get up, Acharjya, and listen to the explanation of the passage you have failed to understand.' Then the true reading of the sloka was told me and the explanation I received was perfectly satisfactory. The Being then added : 'Grieve no more ; your prayer has been heard : I Myself am come to teach the ways of salvation to man.' I opened my eyes, and saw Nimai standing before me ! Presently He vanished from my sight. From that moment my soul has been filled with joy. It may, of course, have been merely an hallucination. There is no doubt, however, that if Nimai, the grandson and son of two great pandits, and himself a pandit of unrivalled powers, becomes a bhakta, he will be of great service to humanity. But if he be really the He, Whom we are expecting, He is bound to come to me and prove to me that He is none other than my beloved Lord."

Advaita had so strong a faith in the coming of the Lord that he was led to look at the matter from a practical point of view. God's creatures were suffering, and he had prayed to Him to come and relieve their sorrows. He was convinced in his mind that God had listened to his prayer and that He was coming. What, again, could be more natural than that He should seek Advaita and announce Himself to him ?

Nimai was at the time meditating a visit to Advaita, with the object of asking him to intercede for him with God. But Advaita was a saint. He was recognised by all the Vaishnavas as such. Nimai's father, Jagannath, treated him as he would do an inspired man possessed of more than human powers.

* Whenever the rendering of a sloka in a book which is authoritative seems obnoxious, the bhakta, as a rule, prays and refuses food till his doubts have been removed.

How then was Nimai, who in his humility esteemed himself meaner than the grass beneath his feet, to venture to approach him ? At length, however, he summoned up courage to go, but not without the precaution of taking Gadadhara with him as a companion. The idea that he was going to see a saint and the head of the Vaishnavas, filled his heart with fervid emotion. As he neared Advaita's house, he was almost beside himself with anxiety ; and when having entered, he saw the old saint at his devotions, with a light that seemed divine shining in his bhakti-inspiring face, he wished to throw himself at his feet. He succeeded in advancing a step or two towards the saint, when suddenly uttering a piercing cry, he fell flat on the earth in a deep swoon !

The cry which Nimai uttered drew the attention of Advaita who at once realised the scene before him. He perceived that Nimai had come to visit him and had fainted away in the excess of his emotion. For, as an eminent bhakta himself, he had frequent experiences of the kind. He gazed at the golden figure that lay prostrate before him with wonder, bewilderment and joy. "How beautiful his form !", thought he, "and impressed with what transcendent grace ! God is described as the most beautiful and graceful Being in existence,—a description which might be applied to this youth, whose every pore, moreover, seems to emit a divine spark. My Lord Sree Krishna is described as of a dark complexion, while this young man is of the colour of gold. But mysterious are His ways !"

The more Advaita gazed, the more enthralled he found himself ! He recalled his dream, and the recollection of it moved him powerfully. He found himself, in spite of his efforts to check it, overcome by an irresistible belief, which so affected his heart that he could no longer restrain his feelings, to which he gave vent in these words :

"So Thou art come, my beloved ! They call Thee merciful. This condescension of Thy coming amongst us, puny

creatures, is a proof of Thy infinite mercy. I am delighted beyond expression to see Thee in our midst and in such a beautiful form." Advaita was a rigid observer of forms, and now suddenly recollected that he had not worshipped his great Guest in due form. Remembering this, he hastened to bring flowers, Ganges water and other necessary materials for the purpose ; and with these he worshipped the feet of Nimai, chanting the well-known sloka "salutation to Sree Krishna," etc., which is uttered by a bhakta when worshipping God.

Now, according to the prevailing belief, when a superior pays undue reverence to an inferior, the latter is sooner or later overtaken by misfortune. Gadadhar was pained, therefore, to see the old saint of seventy-five, Advaita, worshipping the feet of his young friend, Nimai. In a tone of protest he remarked to the saint that as his young friend had not done him any injury it was unkind of him, an old bhakta, to bring misfortune upon an innocent youth by shewing him the reverence only due to God. Advaita stared at Gadadhar, and for the first time perceived his presence. He smiled and observed : "You will soon know, Gadadhar, what sort of being your young friend is."

"Is my friend, then, Sree Krishna himself?", thought Gadadhar in his mind. "That must be so, when the great saint Advaita himself testifies to it," thought Gadadhar again. The idea, however, that his young friend, Nimai, might be Sree Krishna himself, did not give him unalloyed pleasure. Before this he was Nimai's friend and Nimai was his ; but now he seemed suddenly to discover an impassable gulf between them.

In the meantime, Nimai, awaking from his trance, opened his eyes. Seeing Advaita kneeling at his feet, he hastily arose and bowed to him with great reverence.

He then said, addressing Advaita, "Goswami ! rescue me from the sea of worldliness wherein I am drowning. Lead me to the lotus feet of Sree Krishna, thou world-famed bhakta."

Nimai was proceeding in this fashion, when Advaita, uttering some words the while, hastily withdrew, whereupon Nimai and Gadadhar rose and went home, leaving Advaita alone to his meditations.

When Nimai spoke to him as might a novice asking him for spiritual favours, Advaita was disappointed. "Why should Krishna, if Nimai were He, speak to me in this fashion?", thought he. "Was I then mistaken in supposing him to be Krishna Himself?" Nimai's presence had enthralled his soul; but now that he was gone, Advaita felt himself quite free from his influence. He wondered at his own stupidity and folly in paying divine homage, at the spur of the moment, without inquiry, to one who was no other than the son of Jagannath,—a lad whom, but the other day, he had seen naked in the street. What was the strange influence that had blinded his eyes?, thought Advaita. And he censured his folly in having paid divine homage to Nimai in the presence of Gadadhar. He felt himself humiliated; and to avoid a scandal, he fled to his home at Santipur. He muttered to himself, while proceeding home, "If Nimai be really He, he will no doubt seek me out."

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST SIGHT.

ACCORDING to arrangement, Nimai at nightfall proceeded to Sreebas's house. The object of this old and pious Vaishnava was to experiment with Nimai who seemed to him to be a very sensitive subject. He expected manifestations relating to the mysteries of the other world through him. There were others also who assembled,—all friends of Nimai, such as Gadadhar, Murari, Mukunda, Sreeman and others. When they had sat down, Nimai again attempted to reveal his secret to them, but he fainted away !

This incident did not strike many of those present as any thing unusual, as most of them had witnessed him in similar swooning fits before. So they began to adopt all the methods they knew to bring him round. Nimai recovered his senses, though only partially ; for he began to bewail his fate in these words : "I found my Krishna but I have lost Him !" Now these words were simple, but they affected those present most powerfully, uttered as they were with the deepest pathos by Nimai. Have you ever seen the spectacle of an affectionate mother who had just lost her only son ? If you have, you can form a faint picture of the spectacle that Nimai presented to his companions. To him Sree Krishna was a reality ; to him His loss was real. He had actually found his God, and he actually lost Him. Now you can realize to some extent how he felt. The pathetic tone of his voice "would melt a stone." The sorrow

revealed thereby made the hearts bleed of those who perceived it. The effect, which his deep-seated sorrow produced upon his body, proved the intensity of the anguish that consumed him. Thus, he rolled on the ground as if stung by "a thousand scorpions," because of having lost Krishna.

We shall presently describe how this bereavement affected him both in mind and body. Now, whether it was due to the spectacle before them, or to the influence which Nimai involuntarily communicated to any one who approached him, those who were attending on him were violently moved. Thus every one wept with Nimai, though they did not precisely know what they were weeping for. Powerfully affected as they were, they had yet enough sense left them to comprehend that they were not acting like sane and sober men of the world. "What may all this mean?", said they to themselves. "Are we men or ethereal beings? Are we still on earth or have we been transported to spiritual regions? Has Nimai, as a celestial Being, or even Krishna Himself, carried us with him thither?" Thus they spoke to one another in the momentary lucid intervals they occasionally enjoyed between the spells of ecstatic rapture which held them in bondage, beyond the limits of self-consciousness, throughout the long wintry night. They only knew that they had entered and remained for hours in a state of transcendental, spiritual emotion beyond the power of memory to convey or reason to analyse.

In the morning Nimai came home, and with returning darkness, again accompanied by his friends, repaired to the house of Sreebas. Again he attempted to disclose his secret, and again he failed. The utmost that he could achieve, during his moments of semi-consciousness, was the utterance of a word or two which suggested the nature of the burden that was on his mind. Sometimes he would clasp the neck of one of his attendants and declare, "Brother, bring back to me my Krishna and thereby

save my life." To another he would say, "Yield yourself up to Krishna, brother, for there is none like Him."

He eventually succeeded, however, in disclosing the secret which he had attempted so often to tell them and always without success. He said : "Brothers ! Listen to the story of my grief : how having found Krishna I lost Him again. I beheld one morning at Kanai-natshala* a boy of dark complexion coming towards me. His beauty surpasses imagination. His tender and bewitching gaze enthralled my heart. He approached me smiling, as if his love for me knew no bounds, and such was the light in his countenance that he seemed the very incarnation of joy. He danced with delight as he came, and the jingling of his anklets sounded like celestial music. Having approached, he embraced me !"

Nimai could proceed no further. After several futile attempts he had been able partially to disclose the sorrow that pressed upon his heart. But before he could complete his narrative, he was overtaken by a death-like swoon. The recollection that he had been embraced by Sree Krishna, overwhelmed him completely !

His attendants could observe no sign of life in him whatsoever ; for, not only had he ceased to breathe, but his heart had ceased, to beat. He seemed, to all intents and purposes, dead. His attendants were consequently very much alarmed. They had never before seen Nimai in a trance, so deep and death-like. They feared that he was lost to them for ever ; that Sree Krishna had allowed him to survive so long only that he might disclose the story to his bhaktas, and had now taken him to Himself. Hours passed in this manner, and Nimai regained consciousness only when it was near morning.

One or two words of explanation are necessary here. We have already seen that the object of the Krishna Leela was

* This is near Gour, then the capital city of Bengal.

to furnish mankind with the means of salvation through the heart, that is to say, by bhakti and prem to God. We have also said that one of the objects of the avatar of Sree Gauranga was not only to bear witness to the truth of the Krishna Leela, but also to shew by its practical application how men might attain to God through its means, Sree Gauranga himself acting the part of a bhakta. In fact, as practice is better than precept, he became a bhakta to shew how one ought to act in order to attain to God.

In the Krishna Leela we have seen that Radha bathed every day in the Jamuna river to purify herself, and that one day as she was coming home she saw Krishna gazing tenderly at her. Thus commenced her attraction for Krishna. Nimai was initiated by Iswar Puri at Gya, and was thus purified, even as if he had bathed with that object in the Jamuna. Subsequently, he and Krishna met at Kanai-natshala and Nimai was fascinated. Thus the Purba Rag or first attraction of Nimai for Sree Krishna commenced.

The reader is referred to the short description given before regarding the manner in which Radha was affected, according to the Bhagabat, by her Purba Rag. But Nimai was many times more powerfully affected than even Radha was. In short, Nimai manifested Purba Rag for God in a way never dreamt of by the Vaishnava philosophy. Thus Srīmat Bhagabat says that love for Krishna is evidenced by eight external signs, namely, weeping, laughter, shivering, sweating, -pulok (*i. e.*, the hair of the body standing erect), fainting, etc. But the symptoms that developed in Nimai were many times more than eight. Overtaken by Purba Rag, Nimai became wholly and entirely subject to its influence. He lost all control over his emotions and constantly complained that he could not restrain his tears. He became, as we know, the meekest of men and his bhakti transcended all human experience. His sorrowful

countenance and melancholy air created a feeling of sympathy in all who beheld him. Then, he became absent-minded, careless of every thing worldly, and constantly engaged in devotion. There was not a moment when he was not communing with Sree Krishna. His self-possession frequently left him; indeed, he was far more often under the influence of the holy spirit than not. Karnapura, the author of Krishna-Chaitanya Charit, thus describes the state of Purba Rag as observed in the Lord Nimai. "He weeps incessantly from dawn to dark. When evening comes he asks if it is morn, and argues out the matter in his mind. Anon he says: 'Tis morn, for there is light.' Notion of time he has completely lost. Soon as he hears the name of God pronounced, prostrate he falls and rolls in the dust, and quakes from head to foot, and heaves forth sighs, while shedding ceaseless showers of tears of love."

His tears are always eager to flow, but in the presence of strangers he makes great efforts to suppress them. He rises up in the morning, and tears of joy* rush from his eyes. While he washes his face he sheds tears. At breakfast, he sits absorbed in divine contemplation and he touches hardly anything. It is only at the earnest entreaty of his mother, Shachee, that he takes a few mouthfuls of food. He lies down at noon to rest himself, but only wets his pillow with his tears.

So engrossed was he with the contemplation of Krishna that he could think or speak of nothing which did not concern Him. As we have said before, the presence of a

* There is a vast difference between weeping and shedding tears from bhakti or prem to God. Thus a man, when suffering, weeps; and a man under the divine influence "sheds tears of joy." Later on, the manner in which the heart is exercised by these divine influences and worldly feelings would be explained. Be it noted here that so good is Sree Krishna that even the devotee who bitterly weeps for his separation from Him all the while enjoys supreme felicity.

discordant element in the shape of a stranger or outsider interrupted the force of the influence that was upon him, so that he was generally able to restrain his emotions. But when a friend came to see him, the very opposite effect was produced in him. To the friend he would ask questions like these: "Has Sree Krishna been your way?" Or "Have you met Sree Krishna?" Or "Can you tell me where Sree Krishna has fled to?" These questions he would ask with such simplicity and earnestness that the person to whom they were addressed would immediately burst into tears. Nimai, surprised at the outburst, would anxiously ask his friend: "Why do you weep? Is it because Sree Krishna will not come again?" And then he would himself burst into tears on realizing that he had been raving all the while!

One day Gadadhar approached him with Pan (betel) in his hand, and he eagerly asked: "Gadadhar, where is my Krishna?" Gadadhar, used to such questions, did not pay any particular regard to the query, and simply replied: "He is within your heart; where else should He be?" Nimai believing that he would now be able to seize his beloved, exclaimed:—"He is in this bosom, you say?" And at once he attempted to tear open his breast with his fingers! Gadadhar and Shachee both caught hold of his hands to prevent him from wounding himself, and tried to soothe him. "Gadadhar," said Shachee, "you are a sensible child, you have saved my Nimai's life. Were you not near, he would have killed himself. Even as it is, he has wounded his breast with his nails, and blood is flowing from the wounds." And, as a matter of fact, blood was trickling down his breast profusely from the wounds inflicted on himself.

Nimai now began to see Krishna in everything and everywhere, awake or asleep, in the air, on the water, in the wood, on the plain,—in fact, the whole world to him was full of Krishna.

Sometimes he would actually speak to Him in a state of ecstasy ; sometimes he would shed tears of joy and describe His beauty in a state of semi-consciousness to his friends ; and sometimes he would weep on missing Him. He scarcely took any notice of those who surrounded him. He was conscious only of his Krishna, and of nothing else. Neither could he perceive the necessity of the existence of any other being but Krishna. People did not understand the state he was in. Indeed, he did not hear what others said to him, or if he did, he seemed not to understand them. When he returned to his senses he could not remember what had happened to him during his state of unconsciousness, and the little that he remembered had the vagueness of a dream. In the latter case he would sometimes ask his friends or his mother to pardon him for anything incoherent that he might have said when he had lost all control over himself. Sometimes he would ask his friends to tell him what he had done or said in the state of trance. His friends, however, did not always disclose to him all that he wanted to know.

Following in the wake of the saints who have recorded the doings of Lord Nimai, I must give here some more definite particulars as to how the influence upon him began its operations, and how it, for some time, completely mastered him. It must be borne in mind that when Nimai was invited by Sreebas to pass the evenings with him, the latter had no definite idea as to how he would utilise the time with his invited guest. But shortly after the meetings began to be held, Sreebas and his friends saw strange manifestations thereat, of which Nimai was the medium. This led them to continue the experiments night after night. The manifestations seemed marvellous ; so, to prevent interruption, no outsiders were admitted, during their sittings, to the house of Sreebas, which was protected by a high wall all round, and a strong door.

They had two objects in view in carrying on the experiments. Firstly, the manifestations seemed so curious as to lead them to expect most important results from them. Secondly, they knew not how, but felt themselves overcome by a celestial joy when in the company of Nimai. It was, therefore, the most ardent wish of those who had passed a night with Nimai once, to come again, and never let slip an opportunity of attending the seances. Every evening they assembled and strongly bolted the door from the inside, after which no one was permitted to enter the house of Sreebas until the meeting was over. Gangadas, a bhakta, was the fortunate man appointed to keep guard at the door.

We have called the meetings "seances," and the divine manifestations, experiments, advisedly. When Nimai first attended the meetings it was found that he was influenced by a power exterior to himself, which, and not his own soul, controlled his thoughts and actions. This influence, day by day, increased in power, until it obtained complete possession of him. Indeed, eventually the influence obtained so much control over him that he sometimes ceased to be Nimai Pandit altogether. In time, Nimai obtained ascendancy over this influence and brought it into subjugation ; but of that hereafter.

As the influence began to exercise authority over Nimai, it was found that he was gradually losing control over his own body, his own senses, nay, over his very soul. When he wanted to say something, the influence prevented him ; and when the influence wanted to make him speak or act, he involuntarily resisted it. And thus there was a struggle between the influence and Nimai, and the result was external manifestations, frequently accompanied or followed by violent contortions of Nimai's body. For instance, the influence would urge Nimai to say that he was Akroor, the person who led Krishna from Brindaban to Mathura. But Nimai would refuse. Then there was a contest,

in which the influence would eventually win, and impel Nimai to declare that he was Akroor.

Let us, in this place, notice the minute description given by the saints, his chroniclers, regarding the manner in which the influence affected his body and mind. Now Nimai weeps, and he weeps for hours together. When he weeps, sometimes he cannot assign any cause for his weeping. Sometimes he tries to explain himself but cannot ; and sometimes he tells his companions what he is weeping for, because Krishna has forsaken him. The weeping is accompanied by floods of tears, which actually make the earth, where they fall, muddy. Tears gush from his eyes as water from a fountain.

The mood changes, and then he begins to laugh, and he laughs for an hour together. The weeping makes his companions weep with him, and the laughter makes them laugh. Sometimes he cannot or, at least, does not explain the cause of his laughing ; sometimes he does, to the effect that it is impossible for Krishna, the loving Lord, to leave him, for he has chained Him in his heart.

It soon came to be perceived that if one symptom appeared, the opposite was sure to follow. For instance, when there was weeping, laughter was sure to be the next manifestation ; and when there was laughter, weeping was sure to follow. Not that one was to follow the other immediately as a matter of course ; but it was clearly established that if a strange symptom manifested itself one day, a contrary one was sure to appear sooner or later. Thus, as I said previously, laughter followed weeping, and *vice versa*. Sweating was one of the symptoms which sometimes occurred as a result of the influence ; it was, however, so very unusual that it created wonder. This sweating is thus described in the Chaitanya Bhagabata :

Whenever the Lord perspired

Even Ganga's self seemed to flow from him.

Then again, his body would become dry and hot to such an extent that even when big jars of water were emptied thereon, its pores absorbed it all instantly. There was thus an ebb and flow of water through the skin. Sometimes there was a violent shivering and a chattering of the teeth, and sometimes the body became so rigid that it seemed to be made of a single piece of some unyielding material.

Sometimes breathing was suspended altogether, and sometimes it became so strong that it seemed that a storm was blowing and those who sat before him had to move aside to give it passage, so violent was the shock they received.

Sometimes Nimai's body became so heavy that it could be lifted only with great difficulty, and sometimes it became so light that each of his companions, weak or strong, could in turn take him up in his arms,—a full-grown man something like seven feet high,—and then dance with joy. Indeed, his body sometimes became so light that he was seen to float in the air, though only for a few moments.

Sometimes he formed his body into a circle by bringing his feet into touch with his head, and turned round and round in the yard of Sreebas like a wheel. Sometimes there was so violent a hiccup, that the sufferer, Nimai, became quite restless on that account. Sometimes his bright countenance became pale or colourless, sometimes red, and sometimes dark. Sometimes the colour of his eyes also changed; indeed, sometimes they exhibited two different tints. Sometimes the hair stood on end all over his body with plum-like pimples at their roots, from which blood oozed.

We have already said that his limbs sometimes became so stiff that they could hardly be extended. Sometimes, on the other hand, they became so soft and pliable that his body seemed to be altogether destitute of bones. Sometimes he moved about on all fours, and sometimes he danced as if he had no control over his movements.

In the midst of these manifestations, he would sometimes personate other people, especially those who had figured during the time of Krishna, and sometimes he would talk as the baby Sree Krishna used to do.

Gradually the manifestations became more coherent and graceful. Those in the spiritual world can communicate with those on earth in a material form only through matter. It is thus that spirits communicate with men. The spirit takes possession of the body of a man suitable to its purposes, and then opens communications with mankind. The higher spirits have to avail themselves of highly-organised bodies to give expression to their elevated thoughts. The highest spiritual existence is God Himself. A wise master never breaks the laws made by himself, and the wisest master in existence, God, certainly does not do so. God, therefore, in order to communicate with man, must adopt the same means as other spirits. Higher spirits need highly-organised bodies to serve their purpose. God, Himself perfect, needs a perfect specimen of human organisation. Such was the body of Nimai, which He created, appropriated and adopted for the purpose of associating with mankind, not only to converse with them but to act with them.

This body of Nimai, though made perfect by God for His own purposes, had to be nourished, however, in this world of imperfections and impurities. These defects and blemishes necessarily attached themselves to Nimai's body, which had to be divested of them, chastened and gradually perfected to serve the purpose for which it was created. Thus the body had first its fits, which ignorant people called insanity ; and then a fever which purified it so much as to enable it to receive and nourish the divine influence instilled into it. This divine influence next subjected the body to a thorough process of development and purification ; the whole body was made to undergo a thorough preparation for the purpose of receiving the Great Soul of all

souls. It was this process of preparation that caused the outwardly visible and wonderful manifestations in Nimai.*

* Intelligent people will go to Siberia to examine the bones of a mastodon; but they will not move a finger to ascertain the fact whether they shall live or not after death. Yet this all-important fact can be ascertained by a very simple process. "Possessions" take place frequently, and there is not one village in the world which cannot furnish an example. Men who pretend to be wise, take no notice of such occurrences. They attribute the manifestation either to disease or roguery. It is quite true that fits are often mistaken for possessions, and also that people pretend they are possessed for the purpose of deception. But a little patience will furnish the honest inquirer with a true case; and if he be fortunate enough to get hold of such an one he will thereby earn for himself a blessing which is much more valuable than a kingdom. For such an incident will prove to him the immortality of the soul. Being furnished with such information, he will be able to defy the miseries of this world. Besides, it will lead him to be good and pious, and enable him to trample worldly temptations under foot. A true case of possession will also prove that the avatar of God is possible under the laws of nature. Through a human body, perfectly formed, God Almighty can manifest so much of Himself as is conceivable by, and therefore necessary for, man; for, man can not conceive of a being who is different from himself fundamentally. You can give God Almighty many high attributes such as illimitability and so forth, but they will convey no definite idea to the human mind. Man can conceive of God only as a man,—only perfect, perfect in every thing. The rational basis given of the avatar will not be possibly approved of by a class of Vaishnavas, who, in their excess of bhakti for Sree Gauranga, maintain that the Person of the Lord is a constant quantity. We have, however, to found the Leela upon a rational basis or it will not be accepted by a large class of people. For ourselves we do not see, however, much practical difference in the theory propounded and the creed of a certain class of Vaishnavas referred to. This aspect of the question will be thoroughly discussed hereafter.

The belief in "possessions" is universal, and that is proof enough that it is based upon positive fact. In Europe, the belief in possessions does not obtain that hold now that it did during the Middle Ages. The Bible itself testifies to it,—indeed, every holy book in the world does so. Dealings, however, with dark spirits are prohibited: try the spirits, says the Bible. Among the Hindus there is precisely the same injunction. Indeed, a belief in possessions

We have stated before that when a symptom appeared in his person, this was an intimation that the exactly opposite symptom would next manifest itself, sooner or later. This was also true in regard to his mental state. When, for instance, there was grief, joy was sure to follow. The fact is, Nimai was subjected to two different states of mind : At one time he felt that Sree Krishna had abandoned him, and then he shewed all the symptoms of unutterable grief. Indeed, in the depth of his sorrow he would swoon away, and that repeatedly. His companions imbibed the spirit from him, and felt as he did, though, of course not in an equal degree. But the mood changes again, and Nimai feels that Lord Sree Krishna is with him, and then he shows all the manifestations of intense joy. And as in the case of sorrow, so in the case of joy, he falls down in a swoon from the very excess of his emotion. His companions receive a portion of the joy, and a drop is enough literally to make them delirious with it.

During the first few nights they did nothing definite. The companionship of Nimai imparted to his attendants an irresistible flow of bhakti ; they drank it, and became intoxicated with it. They passed their nights in holy joy ; and when morning dawned they reproved the sun for disturbing them in the midst of their celestial happiness. In the excess of his joy, Nimai at length began to dance ; and when he danced, his companions were irresistibly led to follow his example, step by step. By and by, the musical instruments necessary to accompany the Kirtan were introduced. This Kirtan, in the beginning, was nothing more than the several names of Sree Krishna strung together and set to music. No sooner was the Kirtan begun

led to a good deal of mischief in Europe ; but then, there is an abuse of every thing. The question before us is not whether dealings with spirits are conducive to the well-being of men or not, but whether "possession" is a fact or not. One who believes in the Bible cannot deny it.

than Nimai was overpowered by emotion. We have noticed above what Kavi Karnapur said in his Chaitanya Charit Kavya, namely, that the Lord fell down in a swoon as soon as the name of Sree Krishna was uttered in his hearing. That being the case, one can get some idea of how it affected Nimai when these sweet names of his beloved Lord were strung together and set to music! Either he fainted away outright or he danced in the excess of his joy, utterly unconscious of the fact that, being a great Pandit, dancing in his normal state was an abomination to him.

We have translated below a few passages from the author's Bengali work on this subject, giving a description of Nimai's Kirtan as it was in the beginning.

"The *Sankirtan* or chanting of hymns by Nimai and his companions, was unlike anything then known. The musical instruments used on the occasion, were the *khole* (a sort of long drum) and the *kartal* (cymbal). The tune of the hymns was simple, yet sublime and soul-moving. After the instruments had been played in concert for a while, during which the singers composed and concentrated their minds, the chanting of the hymns commences. Nimai, beside himself with bhakti, rises up and begins to dance. His companions, in a moment, being, as it were, electrified by his performance, join Nimai. Nimai dances on, with uplifted arms and with eyes turned upwards, and from time to time, cries out, *Horibole*, which means, 'say Hari', or simply *bole bole*. In the course of the Kirtan the members often exhibited many external signs of deep emotion. They would become senseless, or roll on the ground, embrace one another, cry and laugh alternately, and sometimes, as with one voice, make the sky resound with the ejaculation of "Haribole, Hari." The scene that presented itself was a heavenly one. The soul of the Kirtan was, of course, Nimai, whose influence awoke profound religious enthusiasm in his companions, who felt

themselves immersed, as it were, in a 'sea of divine bhakti.' They felt as if they were with Krishna, and Krishna with them. Every one present was, in spite of himself, carried away by the torrent of religious excitement."

This scene was repeated night after night.*

* To outsiders a Kirtan may seem to be a noisy and artificial affair. It is so when there is no bhakti in the heart. But when there is bhakti the Kirtan is a celestial enjoyment with power of purification. Men sit together with musical instruments for the purpose of chanting the praise of the Lord, who is so good, kind, and disinterestedly affectionate. The music in the beginning soothes the soul, and prepares it to receive the pious sentiments which the hymn contains. Nay, it has also the power of evoking such sentiments in the heart. The music and sentiments in the song move the heart. When one of the party is moved, others are also moved by a mysterious law of sympathy. The whole party is then saturated with pious feelings. It also sometimes happens that the presence of an unsympathetic infidel in their midst disturbs the work of the influence on the mind and spoils the whole Kirtan. This pious feeling is followed by an influx of joy in the heart. This joy is communicated from one to another, and the state of their feeling is expressed either by dancing, pulak, weeping, or complete loss of consciousness. But the Kirtan in which the Lord presided was a quite different affair; the feeling that was evoked there is simply indescribable.

CHAPTER X.

BHAKTI IS NOT IMAGINARY SOMETHING.

THE friends of Nimai learnt from his life one grand truth, namely, that bhakti was not an imaginary something but a powerful reality, and that Nimai could bestow it at pleasure upon whomsoever he liked, as if it had been a material object. They also felt that those, who received it, became, as if, born again,—new men, better in every respect and happier than they were before.* Thus bhakti began to be the most prized of all objects on this earth to them. His other companions, therefore, begged to be favoured by him with the bhakti of Krishna. Even Shachee one day said to him : “I hear you have brought the bhakti of Krishna from Gaya, my child ; let me have a little of it.” “Mother,” replied Nimai, “you shall be blessed with it through the favour of pious men ; for, God acts through them.”

Gadadhar, his constant friend and companion, wished to make the same request to Nimai, but had not the requisite courage. One night as they lay down together on the same bed, Gadadhar clasped Nimai's feet and began to weep “Why do you weep, Gadadhar,” earnestly asked Nimai, as he raised

* Of course, every one has bhakti in his heart,—some in a higher, some in a lesser degree. But as a sufficient quantity of heat is necessary to produce steam, so a sufficient quantity of bhakti is necessary to make a man born again. You may go on applying heat to water for ever and ever ; but there will be no steam so long it is less than 212 deg. Fahr. In the same manner the bhakti of a man is of very little use to him if it is not strong enough to be able to make a new and better man of him.

him up. Gadadhar replied with sobs : "You have saved many, and shall your slave Gadadhar alone never taste bhakti ?" Nimai smiled and answered—"To-morrow, when you visit the Ganges to bathe, you shall be blessed with it." Nimai spoke as if he were joking ; but he was not, and Gadadhar took the promise seriously, indeed. As day dawned, Gadadhar went to the river to bathe ; and, as the Chaitanya-Mangal has it :

"He bathed himself and great was his joy,

To find his heart o'erflow with reverence for Krishna."

The Lord and His companions were seated together when Gadadhar approached them like a drunken man, with a tottering gait. Tears of joy trickled down his cheeks and breast. Putting his cloth round his neck, as a sign of devotion, Gadadhar prostrated himself at Nimai's feet. Sree Gauranga smilingly said, "Gadadhar, have you got it ?" Gadadhar answered by bathing the Lord's feet with tears, without saying a word.

Thus was Gadadhar blessed with divine bhakti. Thenceforth when Nimai began dancing, Gadadhar danced by his side ; and the touch of Nimai melted, as it were, Gadadhar with joy.

Suklambar was a neighbour of Nimai, as stated before. He was a great ascetic : he had always regarded Nimai as if he were his own son. He would wipe off the tears from Nimai's eyes and cheeks, remove the dust from his person, and do other similar services. In course of time Suklambar perceived that bhakti was the highest state attainable by man ; that his asceticism had done him very little good, for he had got no bhakti, and that Nimai was capable of imparting it at will. One day, therefore, he addressed Nimai in these words :

A tired pilgrim from shrine to shrine I went,
And heedless of sufferings, I travelled far
To Madhupuri and Dwaravati. Grant me,
O Lord, the bhakti of Krishna.

Chaitanya-Bhagbat.

Here Suklambar betrayed his vanity. What he said was, in effect, that since he had suffered much by travelling to sacred shrines, he deserved to have bhakti. The Lord wanted to purge him of his vanity, and replied : "Are not jackals and dogs to be found at Madhupuri and Dwaravati ?" Convinced, by these words, of his own folly, he fell upon the ground and wept tears of profound repentance. Said he : "Forgive me, my Lord ! I deserve nothing, because I have not been able to conquer vanity."

The Lord, who could not bear to witness distress, felt profound compassion for the humbled ascetic. So, lifting his hand, he said : "Be blessed." No sooner had the Lord said this than a thrill passed through his frame, his hair stood on end, and tears rolled down his cheeks. He felt himself overpowered by a sense of celestial ecstasy, and relieved of all the impurity of his soul ; and presently with his mendicant-bag thrown across his shoulder, he began to dance like a man drunk with joy.

In the same manner, his companions, one by one, received the boon of bhakti from the Lord. They prayed and he gave. For one who is desirous of having bhakti, it is, as a rule, necessary that he should pray for it, that is to say, be in a negative state of mind. This state of his mind enables the novice to receive the gift more readily and utilize it.

This religion that the Lord was teaching, inculcated the doctrine that bhakti is the easiest and surest way of attaining God ; that God has no family of His own, and that His adopted family is composed of His bhaktas ; that is, of those who worship Him with bhakti. Nay, this religion goes even so far as to allege that God Almighty, irresistible and all-powerful though He is, is yet an obedient friend to his bhaktas. People now began to see that Nimai possessed the power of granting this bhakti, an invaluable gift, to any body he chose. They saw it every day that he had the

power, not only of purifying a sinner, but also of making him an active bhakta or ardent devotee of God. A passive Sadhu, who is pure but has no bhakti for God, does not attract Him and is not attracted towards Him. Without bhakti he is only a good man without God. This power, possessed by Nimai, of granting bhakti, created the impression that he was at the least some being higher than man. For, to grant bhakti to one is to make him something like a master in relation to God, who is a serving friend to his bhaktas. So, when Nimai granted bhakti to a sinner he practically issued a mandate upon God Almighty to serve that man, sinner though he had been. "Who is this Nimai, then," thought his companions, "who can thus issue a mandate upon the Almighty God? Is he somebody sent by God, or *the* He Himself?"

It must be borne in mind that the idea of God appearing to man in a human form, never crossed the minds of the generality of Hindus. Of course, Sree Krishna appeared to their fathers thousands of years ago; but then, many learned men in their hearts believed Him to be a mythical character. Others, who believed in His advent, had the idea forcibly impressed on their minds, that Sree Krishna could only have appeared in those by-gone and golden ages when God frequently came into direct communication with man. It never crossed the mind of any ordinary Hindu of that period that God would condescend to appear to the sinful men of this iron age. The holy books of the Hindus did not predict any such Avatar. All the Avatars, according to the holy books, had come and gone except one, who was to appear as a warrior, sword in hand; and Sree Gauranga did not at all answer to this description; so the friends of Nimai naturally could not entertain the idea that he was an Avatar. That being the case, they anxiously inquired of one another who this Nimai Pandit might be, who could thus issue mandates upon God Almighty.

It is quite true that Advaita had predicted that He was coming ; indeed, he went sometimes the length of asserting that He was come ! Few people, however, seriously believed him. But even those who did, could not bring themselves to entertain the notion that He Who was coming or come might be Nimai Pandit, the son of poor Jagannath Misra, who was subject to the laws of nature like themselves, and one who, but the other day, had comported himself as an aggressive, irrepressible and boastful scholar.

When Advaita, and with him his followers, predicted the advent of God, they had not any definite idea as to how He would appear in their midst. All of them naturally thought in their heart of hearts that if the God Almighty came, He would do so with the pomp befitting His exalted position. But Nimai was only a man,—a man who had all the weaknesses of humanity. He ate and slept like others ; he shewed that he was not all-knowing at every step of his life. To think that the Avatar which Advaita had predicted was Nimai, would have been a great disappointment to all, as it actually was to Advaita himself.

“Sree Krishna is here,” “Sree Krishna is there,” “Sree Krishna is come”—these were the expressions which Nimai would use in such a matter-of-fact manner as led his friends to believe that he was not giving vent to fanciful notions but to what he was actually feeling or seeing. Of course, they themselves did not see Sree Krishna ; but they could see that Sree Krishna was not far off from Nimai, and that Nimai had direct dealings with Him. Nimai’s presence filled them with holy feelings, and in his company they felt vividly the nearness of God. The belief, as we have just stated, gradually obtained a very firm hold of the minds of all his constant companions that God was coming. Indeed, they expected every day something very wonderful to happen, though in what way they had no conception. Every one of the companions of Nimai was in a constant state of great

expectation, and they passed their days and nights in a state of semi-trance.

The outside public, however, naturally became curious to know what the matter was with Nimai and his companions, who seemed to have become transformed into beings who continually led a dreamy and unearthly life! Their appearance and actions shewed that they were not in a sober state of mind.

Every night, at the house of Sreebas, Kirtans were sung by a daily-increasing number of pious men. The doors were closed at a fixed hour, and no one, not even an intimate friend, was admitted after the doors had been once shut.

Hundreds of people were drawn to the place by the sounds, that came from within, of music and of "Hari Haribole." They clamoured for admission with entreaties, and sometimes threats, but in vain. The doors remained closed, and they had to return home disappointed. People began to form surmises about what passed within the walls of Sreebas's dwelling-house; and a rumour was spread throughout the town of Navadweep that Nimai and his companions were indulging in vicious pleasures.

The Sankirtan commenced in the month of January, and was carried on most enthusiastically throughout February. By the month of March it came to be known throughout Bengal. Gradually Nimai's party increased in strength, and eminent men flocked to surrender themselves at his feet.

The tumult grew in Nadia. The followers of Nimai were easily marked out from the common herd. They seemed to be absorbed in their own thoughts, and in a state of absolute happiness. This naturally created envy. Then these bhaktas avoided all company and worldly affairs, and were absolutely reticent about their own movements. When any question was asked as to what they did at their meetings, they declined to reveal to unholy and unsympathetic ears anything about the subjects that occupied their minds. Those who nightly

returned disappointed at not being able to gain admittance to the Kirtan party, began to circulate ugly rumours. They argued that "wherever there is secrecy there is crime." But the followers of Nimai, who were constantly "swimming in an ocean of happiness," did not much mind the shafts aimed at them. Seeing that they could not in any way provoke the followers of Nimai, they invented the story that Hossein Shah, the Mussalman King of Bengal, had been moved to put a stop to their malpractices, and was sending several boatfuls of soldiers down the river to arrest not only Nimai, but all his followers !

This rumour day by day gained in strength, and evidence was forthcoming to corroborate the allegation that the embarkation of the troops had already taken place !

As stated above, the bhaktas were constantly in the enjoyment of a spiritual ecstasy which led them to feel vividly the nearness of God Almighty. They felt that God was coming or already come, and they expected every moment some wonderful manifestation from Him. The rumour, therefore, very much damped their spirits. For, their opponents were doing their best to convince them of the truth of the allegation that troops were almost upon them to arrest and eventually to slaughter them.

When the spirits of the bhaktas were at the lowest ebb, the expected wonderful manifestation actually took place.

It was in the hot month of May and the time was the forenoon, when the sun was shining in full force. Sreebas, having bathed, entered his pooja house for devotional purposes. On a cushioned seat was his Image of God. He first saluted it and then sat with his eyes shut to commune with God. Just at this moment there was a knock at the door, which he had taken care to shut, to prevent his being disturbed. There was a knock and a voice which said, "Open the door !"

Sreebas, rather annoyed, enquired who was there. And the voice said, "He Whom you are trying to commune with."

Sreebas could not realize fully the true significance of the words he heard. He was very much annoyed, when he understood the purport of the message, at the blasphemy, and got up in a not very amiable mood, and opened the door. As soon as he had done so an illuminated figure entered the pooja house !

The illuminated figure and Sreebas gazed at each other. What Sreebas saw before him paralyzed all his senses. He saw a human form covered with, as it seemed to him, a dense spiritual essence which emitted a dazzling light, or rather a light which ought to have dazzled, but did not. There could, however, be no mistake that the figure before him was Nimai, the son of Shachee. Nimai smiled and said : "Sreebas, you see I am come." So saying, he sat on the cushioned seat referred to above. No Hindu would have dared to sit on the Throne of God. This was the first time that Sreebas was so familiarly addressed by the young son of his friend Jagannath.

Sreebas stood speechless. It is beyond human power to describe how he felt then ; suffice it to say that he was in the position of a man who suddenly finds himself face to face with God. He had at this moment no doubt whatever in his mind that the illuminated and living figure before him was God Almighty Himself. It was not only the effulgence with which the figure was covered that convinced him of it ; but he found that his soul had been taken possession of, and the belief had been indissolubly impressed upon it.

So, Sreebas was face to face with God Almighty ! He was, as it were, confounded by the advent of the long-expected blessing. The highest desire of Sreebas had now been fulfilled ; and to the man who has nothing to wish for, there is no difference between life and death. Hence, for the good of His creatures He keeps Himself unrevealed to man ; and if ever He reveals Himself, He allows man to have only a faint glimpse of Him. Idea after

idea passed through the mind of Sreebas with the speed of lightning. His first effort was to recollect what actually was the matter with him ; for, the suddenness of the appearance had led him to forget everything for the moment. When he had partially recovered from this shock, the first idea that struck him was to ascertain whether he was dreaming or awake ? "No doubt it is all a dream," thought he. "Yet how can that be ? For I seem quite conscious of being wide awake. Yes, I am awake, but who am I ? Am I Sreebas ? And who is Sreebas ? Am I, then, lucky Sreebas, at length face to face with God Almighty ? But is there really a God at all ?" It was thus Sreebas found his reason tossed about like a rudderless boat on the Ganges during a hurricane.

It was thus Sreebas, a firm believer, became sceptical when he found himself face to face with God ! Now he began to doubt his own existence ! The fact is, the awful Presence unhinged his mind for the moment.

The reader must, however, bear in mind that a doubt about the existence of God and about His nature, is one of the greatest blessings of God to man. It is this doubt which makes religion and God sweet ; it gives life to the devotee's meditations and is the main impetus which leads him on to progress. And this doubt about God, therefore, is what, by the will of kind Providence, attaches itself to every man however holy, and under every circumstance.

The doubt crossed the mind of Sreebas even when he was face to face with one whom he believed to be God Himself ! The fact was that, as stated above, Sreebas was then certainly in a condition almost amounting to temporary insanity. "Is there a God ?"—thought he. And he tried to solve the question. But in that state of his mind, any systematic thinking was out of the question. "Yes, there is a God ; there cannot be any doubt about that," thought Sreebas. "But is it possible that He, the Creator of innumerable universes,

should come among us, the crawling creatures of this earth ? Why should He come ? What does He care whether we suffer or not ? What are we, puny creatures, to Him, that He should take any notice whatsoever of us ?” Such doubts, as I said, are natural to man, and they are of incalculable benefit to him. They make faith doubly sweet ; because, though urged to come, it does not, and when it does come, its approach is so slow ! As we have to look at the sun through a blue glass lest we hurt our eyes, so doubts overshadow the dazzling effulgence of God, and make it possible for man to commune with Him. Let him not think himself unfortunate, who is subject to doubts. Providence has given them to him for his good. As a post fixed in soft soil may be lifted up without much effort, so faith, lightly planted, may be as easily uprooted.

Nimai was there before Sreebas gazing at him with a tender feeling. There was no mistaking that Nimai was God Almighty, and that He was seated there before Sreebas, ready to perform any service for him !

A flood of joy passed through his heart, and he felt that he was about to faint ; but by a mighty effort he succeeded in keeping himself from falling. It would not do to fall in a fainting fit when God Almighty was sitting before him. Moreover the tender gaze of Nimai helped Sreebas much in resisting the faintness that was coming over him.

“So I am the luckiest man in the world, the object of my life is at last accomplished,” thought he. The love of self, which is a feeling ingrained in human nature, suddenly got the better of him at that moment, and he thought that this was his time to extort favours from the Almighty. In that troubled state of his mind he tried in vain to think of the particular favour which would suit him, and he failed with his utmost efforts to select one. Every blessing that occurred to him, when subjected to examination, was found to be not an unmixed good.

Here the humble author of this book ventures to offer a remark. No man in the world will be able to select a *bar** if he finds himself in the position of Sreebas,—face to face with God. He will see that there is no unalloyed happiness in any gift which man can realize or even comprehend in his mind. Self, however, had only a temporary influence over Sreebas who was a saint, and who had trained himself all the days of his life to conquer that feeling. He immediately brought the feelings under subjugation, and felt humiliated that it had arisen at all. Sreebas then tried to welcome the Lord; but language failed him, and he stood, as before, speechless as a statue before Him.

Of course, the Lord knew very well what was passing in the mind of Sreebas,—that it would be not only impossible for Sreebas to speak to Him but even to bear His august presence much longer. So He wanted to divert his attention by giving him some pleasant occupation. And the Lord addressed him thus:—"Sreebas ! fetch water and bathe me."

This command, considering the state of his mind, suited Sreebas very well. He came out of the house and shouted for help. His voice shewed that something strange had happened, and that the matter was urgent; so Sreebas's three brothers, the ladies of the house, and the servants, male and female, hurried up to know what the matter was. When they had come, he told them, in the simplest language, and in a

* A *bar* is a favour which a devotee asks of God Almighty, if He appears before him. To the question, "What would you have if God Almighty offered to give you a *bar*," the author has got invariably one answer from his friends, which is,—the grace of God. But that is evading the question. The grace of God is already upon him who finds himself face to face with God. Man is, however, so constituted that even the sovereignty of the world is no blessing to him.

matter-of-fact way, that God Almighty had come, and water must be brought from the river to bathe Him.

Now, when Sreebas delivered himself thus, his brothers and others did not, for a moment, consider that he had gone mad. Neither did they think that he was making fun of them; for, they knew from his voice and look, that he had never been more earnest in his life than he was then. They all had known that God Almighty was coming, and had expected every moment some such wonderful manifestation. They, therefore, took the announcement of Sreebas in a matter-of-fact way, and hastened to do his bidding. They ran to the bazar, which was on the way to the river, purchased new earthen jars, and then went to fetch water from the Ganges.

One by one, the followers of Nimri appeared on the scene; but they stood outside and did not venture to go in where the Lord was. From outside they suddenly witnessed a wonderful phenomenon. The Pooja-house of Sreebas, within which the Lord was sitting, had a mat wall. Through the fissures in this wall issued pencils of rays, which were distinctly visible from outside. They soon found out that the rays were coming from the body of the illuminated Figure within. The rays coming through the fissures, were not affected by the mid-day sun of May, but remained distinctly visible. Those, who have any experience of this country, know how fierce are the rays of the sun at Indian noon-tide towards the close of May, when the above incident occurred. For any pencil of rays to be visible in such light, it must be stronger than the rays of the mid-day sun of May. The early saints chronicle this incident to give man an idea, how strong was the light that surrounded the person of the Lord.

When everything was ready, the Lord came out of the house to bathe. There were then hundreds of His bhaktas present. And what did they see? They saw a figure of gold,

girt as with "million lightning flashes," issue from the house. Indeed, the light that surrounded him dimmed the mid-day sun of May ! This is what *Chaitanya Charit* says : "When the Lord appeared, he was seen to be enveloped in a garb woven of lightning, a million times condensed, and proportionately bright, which dimmed the rays of the sun."

The Lord seated Himself on a large wooden seat in the open air, and water was poured on His head. The water which descended to the ground from Nimai's body, acquired a peculiar luminosity ; and as it flowed through the yard it sparkled like golden water or water mixed with a sparkling substance such as pieces of diamond. The body of the Lord, when He had bathed, was rubbed with a white piece of muslin, to which the illuminated fluid stuck ; and the white sheet shone in the sun like a piece of gold-embroidered cloth, studded with diamonds !

From there the Lord again entered the Pooja-house of Sreebas, where He sat on the same cushioned seat as that on which the Image of God was seated. Suddenly the bhaktas heard the sound of a flute from within, and the music charmed their ears. It seemed to them that the music must be heard by every one in the universe. When the music entered their ears, the hair of their heads and bodies stood on end, and tears of joy began to flow down their cheeks. The beloved Lord Sree Krishna has been described as All-Joy. The sound of the flute enabled them to realize what that meant. Again sounded the flute, and they fancied that if the Lord should play it again and again they would not be able to bear it, but die of joy. Here the Lord bore testimony to the bewitching properties of the flute of Sree Krishna.

The Lord, from inside, then commanded Sreebas to take Him to his sleeping-room. Thereupon Sreebas had the cushioned seat removed to his sleeping-room, and the Lord was conducted thereto. A canopy was hastily erected above

the seat ; and on the latter was placed a sheet, soft and white as "the froth of milk." Screens were hung against the doors and windows to exclude light and heat from the room as far as possible.

As the Lord proceeded from the worship-room to the sleeping-apartment of Sreebas, a thousand flashes of lightning seemed to play around Him. As He sat on the platform in Sreebas's room, it seemed to be lighted up in an instant. The bhaktas had now a clearer view of the Lord ; and His body appeared to them to consist of strong light only, and not of flesh and blood. That light, though brighter than that of the mid-day sun, was quite serene, and agreeable to behold. It soothed and delighted, but did not dazzle.

Flower garlands were soon ready, and Gadadhar adorned the Lord's body with them. Ornaments of flowers were placed on different parts of His person. A fanciful choora (knot in the hair) was tied on His head, and was encircled with a wreath of flowers. His body was then besmeared with sandal-paste, aguru (a scented substance), camphor, and flower-dust. The chamar was waved by Narahari to drive away the flies.

Thus sat the Lord in the house,—the Lord who is the source of all beauty, of all wisdom, and of all power,—face to face with His creatures ! His creatures wanted to give Him a welcome adequate to His exalted position ; but that was out of the question. Those who wanted to speak, found that their tongues would not move,—others finding speech impossible, burst into tears. They, as already stated, gave Him a clean bed-cover to sit on, and being poor and not having any gold or diamonds to spare, presented Him with flowers. As it was very hot, they besmeared Him with chandan (sandal-paste), and fanned Him diligently. The Lord objected to nothing that was done to serve Him ; on the other hand, He was gracious enough to express His acknowledgments not by speech but by signs and benign smiles.

At length the Lord spoke. The voice was sonorous and impressive, withal sweeter than music. He spoke thus : "You, of course, know who I am. I am He who sits in the heart of every man. I have revealed Myself to tell you that you have nothing to fear from the King of Gaur. I am come this time not to punish sinners, but to reclaim them. I am come to teach My creatures how to attain Me by bhakti and love, and practically to shew all that a devotee should do, by Myself passing through all the stages required of a devotee in his spiritual progress. I will, in short, in this avatar, teach My creatures by precept and example how to attain Me."

The Lord continued: "If the Mussalman sovereign should be minded to maltreat you, I shall not punish him, but soften his heart towards his fellow-creatures. Punishment is not My work, in this avatar. I will shew you how I shall touch the heart of the Mussalman king." And saying this, the Lord beckoned Narayani, a girl of four years and a niece of Sreebas, to approach Him. She approached at the Lord's bidding. "Narayani," said He, "be inspired with bhakti for Krishna." No sooner were these words uttered than the girl burst into tears, saying, "O my Krishna, O my Krishna," and began to express her devotion to God in a manner which an ardent devotee of great power could alone do. The Lord smiled and said, "That is how I will deal with the king, if he should resort to force to maltreat My bhaktas." Sreebas stammered out a reply in these words : "Fear of the king is out of the question, now that Thou hast appeared."

All that happened, confounded every one present. They had no idea as to where they were and what they were doing. Sometimes they took everything to be a dream,—sometimes they thought it a reality. This day's revelation of the Lord was only for a short time. Its object seems to have been to dispel the fear of Sreebas and other devoted

worshippers. which the rumour, that Mussalman soldiers were coming to apprehend them, had created in their minds. Much perhaps was not said on that day. We say 'perhaps', for we know only of those facts which have been left recorded by the bhaktas.

While the Lord addressed Sreebas, Gadadhar repeatedly rubbed chandan on His person. He remembered the words of Sree Advaita, namely, "You will soon know what sort of a boy Nimai is ;" but without saying a word, he busied himself in serving the Lord. At this time Sreebas's wife, Malini, and the wives of his three brothers, appeared at the door. The Lord was seated on the sacred seat, illuminating the room with a strong light. A screen hung before the door. Of the four ladies, who wanted admittance, three were quite young, and had never before appeared before Nimai, uncovered. Addressing Sreebas's youngest brother, they said humbly, "Can we not go in and see Him ?" The Lord was in the room, but they could not venture to go in because of the modesty of their sex.* Addressing Sree Kanta, the youngest brother of Sreebas, in the most imploring tones, "Can it be just," said they, "that we should be deprived of the inexpressible joy of seeing Him, simply because we are women ?" The Lord heard their appeal from within, and replied, "Certainly they may come in and see Me." The ladies having entered the room, overcome with a variety of feelings,—such as joy, bashfulness, expectancy and fear,—saw through the half-uplifted veil, which covered their faces, the benign countenance of the Lord. They then, overpowered by profound bhakti, saluted the Lord with their heads bowed down close to His feet. The Lord felt compassion

* The custom in Bengal is that the young wives of a household cannot speak or even appear with uncovered face before one who is comparatively a stranger.

for them, touched their heads with His lotus feet, and blessed them, saying, "May your hearts abide in Me."

Their husbands who were present, did not feel the least jealousy when Nimai claimed the undivided possession of their hearts. And why? It was because Nimai was not then the young Pandit of Nadia, but the Father of all. They also felt that if a wife is more dearly related to her husband than to any other man, God is still nearer to her.

A little while afterwards the Lord said, "I am going. I shall come again in good time." No sooner had the Lord said this than, uttering a loud scream, Nimai fainted away. All present got alarmed, and eagerly but carefully lifted him up. They saw with dismay that there was no sign of life in him. His condition gave them a fright, when they discovered that he was not breathing. Indeed he seemed, to all intents and purposes, a dead man. After much care he was restored to consciousness. On regaining consciousness he looked around at those who were near him. "Is not this your house, Pandit,?" says Nimai addressing Sreebas. "Yes, I know it is your house, but how came I to be here?" After a little reflection he continued, "I feel as if I had been dreaming; did I rave?" They explained to him that he had had a fainting fit, but that he had not raved at all.

He slowly rose. He was then quite himself,—an ordinary man and the meekest of men in the world. The light had disappeared as soon he had fainted away.

A few years previously when Nimai was only nine years old, at the time of the ceremony of the sacred thread, he had addressed his mother in these words :—"I am going, I shall come again." And, as a matter of fact, we have seen in the above that he did come again. Again he addresses Sreebas, "I am going, I shall come again."

All those who had witnessed the manifestations related in the previous pages, felt bewildered. They had never seen such

things before, nor ever dreamt of the possibility of such an occurrence. Next morning people saw Nimai. He was then but a man, though, of course, a deep and amiable bhakta. That very Nimai who the day before had touched the heads of young ladies with his feet, saying, "May your hearts abide in Me", was now praying, most humbly and with tears, in these words :—"O merciful Krishna ! save me from all worldly desires and draw me towards Your lotus feet." But the conviction of Sreebas and his party was not to be shaken by this change in him. Believing that the Lord had come, they felt that there was for them nothing but joy in the world.

Murari, one of the chroniclers of the early life of the Lord, was the next to be blessed. The Lord revealed Himself to him in that bhak'ta's own house. And in this manner He appeared to a good many of His bhaktas who had earned the blessing by their character and devotion.

Thus Nimai taught mankind. In his infancy he was a restless creature, fond of play. In his youth he was a student, and improved his physical and intellectual nature. In the third stage, we see him cultivating bhakti to show men how Sree Krishna should be served. Finally, he shewed how the fruit of this devotion was the attainment of God.

Hitherto the Lord was only teaching bhakti to God ; the other and higher method, love to God or prem, He taught subsequently. When Nimai manifested Himself as the Lord Almighty He always spoke in the first person, and naturally comported Himself as one who had no equal in the universe. But at all other times he was the meekest of the meek, the humblest of the humble, and apparently the most helpless creature in the world. He would, with folded hands and tears in his eyes, and with a sorrowful countenance which greatly moved the hearts of those who beheld him, beseech every pious person he met to give him a drop—even a drop,—of bhakti for Krishna. Previously he used to fall at the

feet of every one, but such a humility gave his companions great pain. Seeing this, he gave up that practice ; nevertheless he would entreat the meanest amongst his companions to procure for him the favour of Sree Krishna.

In his ordinary mood he was, as we said before, a meek, holy, good-natured and pious companion. If any one then shewed him any extraordinary regard, he expressed so much anguish of soul, that none ventured to treat him in any other way than as an ordinary man. In his ordinary state he seemed to remember only very little of his doings as the Lord Almighty. Indeed, Nimai the Lord Almighty and Nimai the Bhakta were two distinct personages. He knew that he had had fainting fits, but he remembered very little of what he had done or said in that condition. We say, he remembered very little, for he did remember something. This was proved in the following manner. After every manifestation as the Deity he would fall down, apparently dead, and on recovering he again became a man. And fully coming to consciousness he would address his companions thus : "My friends, did I rave ? I know, you all love me dearly and so I ask you always to take care of me. See that I am not led to be presumptuous and to talk in any way disrespectfully of my Lord Sree Krishna."

From what Nimai did say, after the divine manifestation was over, it sometimes appeared that he retained only a very faint recollection of what he had done and said during the period the influence was upon him.

CHAPTER XI.

NITYANANDA.

SREE KRISHNA and Balaram of the Krishna Leela, were revealed respectively in Nimai and Nityananda or Nitai.

Nityananda came to Navadweep, in June, when Nimai had already revealed Himself. Born at the village of Ekchaka, in the district of Beerbhoom, he relinquished the world when only twelve years old. An ascetic came as a guest to his home, and begged him from his parents as a gift. The request, monstrous as it may seem to us, was granted, and Nitai became the companion of the mendicant. There is a tradition that the ascetic was no other than Nimai's elder brother, Visvarup. But we do not know from what source it is derived.

Nityananda travelled for twenty years visiting numerous places of pilgrimage and at last came to Sree Brindaban. There he met Ishwar Puri, who first initiated Gauranga at Gaya. At that time Brindaban was covered with jungle, and Nitai went there in search of Sree Krishna. Ishwar Puri perceiving what he wanted addressed him thus : "Whom do you seek, O good Sadhu ! Sree Krishna is not here. He has been born of Shachee at Navadweep, under the name of Nimai Pandit. If you are seeking Sree Krishna, go to Nadia." Nityananda thereupon hastened to Nadia. For some reason or other he became a guest at the house of Sree Nandan Acharjya, a Brahmin residing in the city, without directly repairing to the residence of Nimai. Seeing that he was a devotee of the first class, the Acharjya gave him a hearty reception.

Three or four days before the arrival of Nitai, Nimai had told his followers that a great being was coming to Navadweep; and on the very morning Nitai reached the town, Nimai informed his companions of the arrival of the great one of whom he had spoken to them. "Go and find him out," said he, "I think he is a re-incarnation of Balaram." But hardly had Nimai finished speaking when he lost consciousness and Balaram took possession of his body. Balaram then, speaking through Nimai, said, "Fetch me liquor."* The eyes of Nimai became blood-shot and he spoke as Balaram would have done. The companions of Nimai, hearing this, stood aghast, as they did not know what to do about the liquor. But Sreebas said: "The liquor that you mean, i. e., the Love of Krishna, is with you: it is not with us." Nimai, however, immediately recovered his normal state, and resuming the thread of his discourse requested his companions to make a search in the town for Nitai. "I am," said he, "impatient to see him." Thereupon Murari, Sreebas, Mukunda and Narain proceeded to the four quarters of the town in search of Nitai. They went through the whole town, but without finding him. In the afternoon they came back disappointed. The Lord smiled and said, "Let us go in search of him pre-

Then Nimai himself, accompanied by all his friends, went out to find Nitai. He proceeded directly to the house of Nandan Acharjya. They all saw a holy It was the in the outer house. He was tall, rather dark-colored young, lotus-eyed, aged about thirty or thirty-two years. na a

Nimai and his friends bowed to Nityananda and then stood before him. Nimai and Nitai gazed at each other, as if they

* It is said Balaram was a drunkard. But it is the view of the uninitiated. Pious men know that Balaram was only drunk with the love of Krishna. Nityananda, as Balaram's Avatara, certainly never touched any smelt liquor.

were old acquaintances. They spoke not a word, yet it seemed that Nitai was losing consciousness. Indeed, Gauranga was all the while entrancing the poor man, and the matter ended in Nitai's almost losing his independent existence, Gauranga having taken possession of every nerve of his body. From there Nitai was led as a prisoner, a very willing one, to the house of Sreebas. There Nimai revealed himself to Nitai and the others present as God Almighty, and sat upon the sacred *dais* of the Image of God. Nitai who had been in search of Sree Krishna these twenty years, now at last found himself face to face with Him. He also saw a wonderful vision.

Here a word of explanation is necessary. Prophets and Avatars come never to destroy but to develop and chasten faiths. In India, hitherto, Ram and Krishna were worshipped as the two Avatars of God. Ram flourished as the warrior king, the object of whose incarnation was the destruction of the wicked, who oppressed their fellows. Krishna came to show by example

Almighty. As soon as Nitai saw the six-handed divinity* he fainted away. For a good many days he remained under the influence of a partial trance. Nitai as a mendicant had his *danda* and *kamandalu*, but at night he broke them. This is what we find concerning him in the book called *Nimai Charit* :—

“Having adopted an ascetic’s life at the age of twelve Nitai wandered about in quest of Krishna. For a time he resided at Brindaban but could not discover that Being whose essence is love. At Navadweep he met with Him who was the wealth of his soul, and the end of his life. Now what need had he more of the mendicant’s water-pot? Accordingly he broke it in pieces. The staff and the cup meant absolute reliance on God.

“His ananda (joy) was nitya (constant) and so he was called Nityananda. He is the Avatar of Balaram, and him he represented in every way as described in the Sreemat Bhagabat. His strong feeling of bhakti and love for Krishna not only carried him away, but also carried away all those who came in contact with him.”

As Nitai fainted away at seeing the six-handed Deity, the Lord touched him and said : “Rise ! All your wishes have been accomplished. You shall carry with you the fountain of prem (love) and bhakti. Distribute them at your pleasure. If any refuses to accept the blessings, implore him.”

And what was this desire of Nitai? It was the salvation of mankind ! And thus young Nimai and young Nitai, the two brothers, stood hand in hand as Krishna and Balaram had done in days gone by, for the deliverance of mankind from misery.

The next day Nimai led Nityananda to his own house. At his request Shachee came out. Then Nimai addressing her

said : "Mother, here is another son of yours. He is my elder brother. Know him henceforth as Visvarup." Shachee looked at Nitai, who certainly appeared to her to be no other than her eldest son, Visvarup, himself ! In fact, the spirit of Visvarup was present in the person of Nitai. Shachee now said within herself : "Is this my Visvarup, my lost wealth ?" She then addressed Nityananda thus : "Child ! Nimai says you are my Visvarup. Is it so ? Come, child, come." She then smelt his head and wept with joy. She then whispered to Nitai : "Hitherto my thoughtless Nimai has been alone ; but now he has you. Protect him, child ; take care of your younger brother. I shall no longer be uneasy on his account."

A mother's love for Nitai did she feel

Her voice was choked, she melted into tears,

Affection warmed her heart as she beheld

Her sons before her stand, and sorrow she had none.

Chaitanya-Mangal.

CHAPTER XII.

RAMAI AS THE LORD'S MESSENGER.

BEGINNING from the time of His revelation at the house of Sreebas, the Lord thereafter frequently manifested Himself. A day or two after the occurrence mentioned in the previous chapter, He commanded Sree Ram, the younger brother of Sreebas, popularly called Ramai, to proceed at once to Santipur. Said He : "Sree Ram ! Go to Santipur and tell Advaita that I am He for whom he has been fasting and depriving himself of the comforts of life and weeping incessantly ; and whom he has ever hoped to bring down to this earth by his un-exampled devotion. Tell him that I am come in response to his prayers, and that he with his wife should forthwith appear before Me."

Now, it must be borne in mind that Advaita had left Nadia in a huff. He suspected that he had been befooled by Nimai. He had the ill-luck of having paid divine homage to the young son of Jagannath Misra before a witness, and he had fled to Santipur to avoid the shame. He was therefore not in the least disposed to accept Nimai as God Almighty. Besides, he was a laborious student, a deep thinker, an austere devotee ; and was not one to be easily influenced by a so-called miracle. His austerities and his piety had created for him a great name throughout Bengal. A sovereign prince of the Eastern districts of Bengal had renounced society at his bidding, and was then waiting at

his door as a disciple. He had thus a character to maintain and a large following to consult in all his actions. To this man, then head of the Vaishnavas, who was himself regarded as divinity or at least a saint of the highest order, Nimai sent, God Almighty, His commands through Ramai, requesting him to come to Him, along with his wife !

As for Ramai, he was at this time constantly under the influence of an unearthly joy. He was now carrying a divine message, and this circumstance had the effect of entrancing him. He had no idea whatever of the possible failure of his errand, much less that there was a chance of Advaita voting him a mad man. On his arrival he stood before Advaita speechless, and every movement of his limbs shewed the joy that agitated and filled his heart, and a touch whereof had deprived him of the power of speech.

The information that Nimai Pandit had revealed himself as God Almighty had spread far and wide in Bengal, almost with the rapidity of lightning. Of course, Advaita had heard it, and that with stern incredulity. He had also heard that Nimai Pandit was manifesting himself principally in the house of Sreebas. Ramai was the brother of Sreebas. Advaita saw the person before him, Ramai, was not in his proper senses and at once suspected that he had come with a message from the so-called God Almighty to fetch him.

Seeing that Ramai could not utter a word, Advaita himself broke the silence. "What is it ? Have you come to take me your God ? And do you mean to say that I, Advaita Acharj, would join in antics like those which you are now indulging in at Nadia ? Of course, Ramai, you don't know what metal I am made of ; but your brother Sreebas knows. And so, youngster, whom I saw the other day naked in the streets, become at last God Almighty Himself ! God does not condescend upon this earth often. And pray, in what sacred book is

predicted, Ramai, that God would appear in human shape before man in this iron age ?”*

The rude address of Advaita had no effect upon Ramai. He was “immersed in an ocean of happiness,” for was he not bearing a message from God ? And Advaita’s shafts could not therefore reach his heart. He said : “I have nothing to do with your remarks, nor do I know much of your Shastras. But listen to the message which God has sent to you through me. He has sent me to tell you that He has come, in response to your prayers, to alleviate the miseries of man, by teaching them how to attain Him by bhakti and prem, and He commands you and your wife to appear before Him at once.”

Advaita would have interrupted Ramai, but found that he had suddenly become powerless to do so. The Lord had sent something through that message which Advaita, powerful as he was, could not resist. He struggled to resist the influence but could not, and he—burst into tears !

These tears washed away, as it were, all his unbelief and life-long opinions founded upon worldly knowledge and logic. Muttered he to himself : “Is He come ? Is He come ? So He has listened to my prayers at last ! Why should not He ? Is not He merciful ? As for the Shastras, is He not above them ? The Lord says that it is I that have brought Him down. Here he pays me a compliment. I, a puny creature, to bring the Almighty God down ? It was His wish to come down Himself, and now He throws the whole responsibility upon my shoulders ! Is it not so, Ramai ?” And he burst into a loud fit of laughter. He then loudly called out to his wife, and

* Here Advaita forgot all that he had himself been doing and preaching these several years. His idea probably was that if He came He would appear to them in a form at least as big as the heavens so as never to give any puny man an opportunity of disputing His authority.

when she had come, he told her in a business-like manner that the Lord had come, and added, "He has commanded you and me to appear before Him at once. So make all the necessary preparations." Saying this Advaita began to clap his hands with joy, exclaiming repeatedly, "I have brought Him !" "I have brought Him !"

A little after, Advaita and his wife and Ramai entered a boat and proceeded towards Navadweep.

The influence which had kept Advaita so long under subjugation was slowly relaxing its hold upon his mind. He found himself almost free from it when he landed at Nadia. That being the case, he felt somewhat stultified. He opened his mind to Ramai and said, "Is it a fact that Nimai is God Almighty ? Please do one thing for me : Promise that you will not tell him that I am coming to him, rather tell him that I refused to come. This will be a test : will it not, Ramai ?"

Ramai smiled and said that he need not have any apprehension about the reality of the revelation. Advaita observed in reply that he would believe Nimai to be God Almighty when he (Nimai) ventured to put his foot on his (Advaita's) head.* The fact is, Advaita was contemplating how to test the "pretensions" of Nimai.

Before Ramai could have reached his house Advaita had received orders to appear before the Lord ! Advaita felt that the Lord had come to know of his arrival, which He could not possibly have done in the ordinary way, for Ramai had only just left him. This fact, insignificant as it was, revived his faith a little, and he proceeded with his wife to the Lord. Where was he going ? To the Lord Almighty ! The thought overpowered him. He tried to think, if it was possible. "Can it be true

* Advaita was a saint, and no human being except his preceptors or elderly relations would venture to touch his head with their feet.

that He, my Lord God, has called me to His presence?" thought he, and he tried to realize in his mind what that meant. The nearer he approached to the house of Sreebas the firmer became his faith, he knew not why, and the more he lost control over himself. To-day possibly he was to attain the highest object of his life; to-day perhaps his vow was to have its fulfilment, for he was going to behold Him, the Lord of the universe! His heart began to throb audibly from excess of emotion. He tried again to deliberate upon what and where he was, and what he would do and say in the Lord's presence, but failed.

At last he entered the house of Sreebas and with difficulty stepped up to the verandah, but could not enter the room where the Lord was seated, for he trembled so that his wife had to support him. Others then helped him to enter. He and his wife entered the room and bowed to the Lord. He now opened his eyes and tried to observe the scene before him; but he saw neither the room of Sreebas nor Nimai, but, says the Chaitanya-Bhagabat:

A form, brighter than a thousand moons,
And fairer far than a thousand gods of love;
The Lord and His worshippers wrapped in light,
And every thing besides.

Yes, not only was the room filled with light, but every man and every thing in it. Light was emitted not only from the person of the Lord, but from His attendants, and from all the inanimate objects in the room, beds, chairs, utensils, and so forth.

He then beheld numberless celestial beings in different attitudes of devotion, offering up prayers to the Lord.

The great angels knelt around the Lord,
Filling all space on earth and in the air.

Chaitanya-Bhagabat.

Advaita saw innumerable beings, incomparably higher than men of this world, fervently worshipping the Father of the

universe, each in his own way. Nay, he felt as if the whole universe, grand and illimitable as it is, was engaged in proclaiming the glory of that incomprehensible and wonderful Being Who had created all out of Himself !

Advaita and his wife were transported beyond themselves. At first they bowed, and then they stood perfectly still. Advaita now perceived that God was even a greater Being than he had thought. What was the good, thought he, of bowing before Him ? He would take no notice of his salutation—the salutation of a puny creature like him. Millions of gods were bowing to Him through all eternity. He himself was an insignificant creature, and could not possibly attract His attention by his salutations and prayers. To bow and not to bow to Him were all the same. All these thoughts rapidly passed through the mind of Advaita.

The greatness of God was manifested to Advaita, for he had wished to see it. He had doubted how Nimai, whom he had seen as a naked child but the other day, could be the Almighty Himself, and he had resolved in his mind that he would only accept Him as the Almighty if Nimai could display infinite power. It was the greatness of God which Advaita had wished to see, and here was a partial manifestation of the Almighty power.

Advaita now perceived that God in His greatness was beyond human conception, and was therefore quite unattainable. He therefore ceased to bow to Him. Despair seized him, and the awe that he experienced in the presence of the Infinite Supreme Being made him tremble from head to foot like a plantain leaf under the influence of a strong gale.

But Advaita was an invited guest of the Lord. Seeing the pitiable condition in which Advaita was placed, He withdrew His illimitable greatness in an instant, and, assuming the form of beautiful youth with rays of light beaming from His person,

smiled and beckoned Advaita to approach Him. Advaita was now emboldened to come up to Him, which however he did while yet trembling. The Lord addressed him thus : "Oh Advaita Acharjya ! Pained to see the misery of mankind you practised austere devotion for their salvation. By the force of your attraction I am come to earth. Henceforth distribute prem and bhakti to your heart's content." When the Lord thus assumed the form of a man and addressed him, it was only then that Advaita's devotional feelings rushed to and warmed his heart, which previously had been chilled by fear and awe.

The words of assurance from the mouth of the Lord emboldened Advaita to stammer out a reply. He said : "Who will listen to or believe me if I say, the Lord has come on earth to save mankind, attracted by my devotion ? Who can bring Thee down to this earth, unless it is Thy will ? All men are Thy children. Who can feel for their misery as Thou dost ? Thou hast come of Thy own will to save Thy own creatures. I am meaner than the meanest. How could I bring Thee here ? Thy advent for the salvation of mankind has enabled us to see Thee, which, above all things, had hitherto been impossible for us. Thou only, O Lord, canst do what to us seems impossible. If Thou wilt permit us, we shall, by worshipping Thee, gain that which is the goal and end of life." So saying he seated himself at the Lord's feet, and, having washed them with holy Ganges water, laid scented substances and flowers upon them. Advaita, as a lover of forms, could not, from previous training, withhold the desire of worshipping Him in due form as prescribed in the Shastras.

The Lord said, "Advaita ! I am willing to give thee a *bar*. Ask whatever thou wilt"* Advaita was never placed in such a

* Whenever the Lord agrees to give a *bar*, He pledges Himself to give whatever is asked. From this it would also appear that none but the Almighty has the right of offering a *bar*.

position before. He knew, at least at the moment, that God Almighty was before him. He had not the least doubt that he would get whatever he asked for, even the sovereignty of the gods. But he had been trained from his early life to feel that there was no happiness in sovereignty,* that on the contrary, it was beset with sorrows and responsibilities. Besides, the presence of the Almighty had elevated his soul, and had led him to feel kindly towards every living creature. His heart then yearned, not for sovereignty, but for service ; not to enjoy but to make others happy ; not to take the Lord all to himself, but to enable his less favoured brethren in the universe to have a share of Him. So he said : "If Thou wouldst give me a *bar* let prem and bhakti be distributed to all irrespective of creed, position and merit. My Lord God, let the meanest of Thy creatures have it."

When Advaita had asked his *bar*, all the bhaktas present shouted "Joy" (glory) : "Joy to the child of Shachèe, and Joy to Advaita, the friend of the humble, the sinner, and the ignorant."

The Lord was greatly pleased. Said He : "The *bar* that thou hast asked of me is worthy of thee, my Advaita. It is such disinterested love that wins my heart irrevocably. I grant your prayer. The greatest of sinners shall, by your favour, be filled with prem and bhakti and purged of their iniquities."

Sree Advaita returned to Santipur a thorough believer. But in spite of his efforts to keep them out, doubts soon began to creep into his intellectual mind. Again he began to give way to doubts about the Lord. That Nimai was possessed of supernatural powers he freely admitted. But such powers were, he believed, sometimes acquired by men, who were thereby enabled to enthrall their fellows. Was Nimai only a man possessed

* The great Emperors of the world will testify to the fact that there is no happiness in sovereignty.

of supernatural powers or was he what he professed to be ? He must, thought Advaita, be subjected to another crucial test ; and he must be taken unawares. He therefore set out early one morning for Navadweep, without giving any warning, with the determination, if possible, of removing his doubts once for all.

Sree Krishna is of a dark complexion while Nimai is the fairest of the fair. Advaita had heard that Nityananda had seen the Lord take the form of Sree Krishna ; and he thought that if the Lord could only shew Himself in that form his doubts would be completely removed. For he was certain that nothing excepting Sree Krishna Himself would be able to take His own form as He flourished in Brindaban.

Even if any miracle-worker had the power of assuming the form of Sree Krishna, that act would be a sacrilege, which, he believed, God Almighty would never permit any one to commit. Advaita first went to the house of the Lord, and not finding Him there he repaired to that of Sreebas, where the Lord was engaged in conversation with His bhaktas about Krishna. Seeing Advaita coming, all, including Nimai himself, stood up to receive him. Advaita bowed to Nimai, and the Lord bowed to him in return. After this all sat down. Nimai then said, addressing his friends,—“Now that Sitapati is come, we shall no more be haunted with the fear of death.” There is a pun in the name Sitapati which, signifying the husband of Sita, might mean either Advaita, whose wife's name was Sita, or Ram Chandra, the Incarnation of Vishnu, Nimai meaning that Advaita was even as Ram Chandra himself and would deliver them from sin.

Advaita evidently took the remark as a compliment, and made a suitable reply, whereupon Nimai addressing him said, “I was very much grieved at your sudden departure for Santipur.” At this moment some one arrived to say that Shachee

Devi had invited Advaita Acharjya to dinner. Advaita accepted the invitation with profound thanks.

In the course of the agreeable conversation that followed, Advaita whispered something to Sreebas. Thereupon Nimai asked : "May I not know what you mean by that whisper ?"

Sreebas replied : "Advaita regrets that you did not appear to him in the form of Sree Krishna as revealed to Nityananda."

Sree Gauranga took the request as a joke and said : "This my real form and the only form which is agreeable to Advaita."

Advaita was in a dilemma, for if he admitted that the natural form of Gauranga was dear to him, he could not press him to assume his other form, namely, that of Sree Krishna, while if he requested to see him as Sree Krishna the request might be taken by Nimai as uncomplimentary to the form in which he was. He therefore remained silent. Sreebas, however, came to his rescue and said : "Lord, your form as Gauranga is more lovely than any other, but Advaita is sorry because you promised to shew yourself to him in the form of Sree Krishna, which you have not done as yet."

Nimai could now see that Sreebas was serious, and the statement surprised him greatly. He blushed and hung down his head in sorrow. He then said : "It seems I must have made the extravagant statement attributed to me. This much I know that I suffer from fainting fits and that in that state I often rave. It is quite possible that on such occasions I rave like a mad man, and even give expression to blasphemous sentiments. But you all love me dearly, and I have often humbly besought you to take care of me, my kind friends, and to see that I do not offend my Lord Sree Krishna by anything that I may say or do in that condition. I am, as you know, beside myself and utterly helpless when in that state. In one of those fits, dear Advaita Acharjya, it seems, while raving, I promised to do that which is simply impossible for a humble

creature like me to do. But is it just and generous to take advantage of what I may have promised in a state of frenzy and press me for its fulfilment?"

Said Sreebas: "But you did show yourself in the form of Sree Krishna to Lord Nityananda?"

Nimai: "Did I? If that be the case, I cannot tell you how it came about. I am utterly helpless at such times, and if any wonder happens through me I have no knowledge how it comes to pass. I assure you I have no control over these extraordinary events. If they happen at all, they come or go of their own accord."

Sreebas: "You say that you have your normal state and your state of frenzy. But in our humble opinion the state that you call frenzical is your natural state, and what you call your natural state is only a—deception."

Nimai: "A glimpse of God can only be seen by the earnest bhakta in meditation. If the Acharjya is desirous of seeing that form, let him sit in meditation with closed eyes; and perhaps Sree Krishna, who is so merciful, may appear before him."

Advaita, partly out of curiosity and partly inspired by hope, closed his eyes in meditation, and the bhaktas present also sat still, in a similar state of mind, with their eyes fixed on him.

In an instant Advaita was thrown into a state of trance, and even his breath became suspended. Nay, for the moment he seemed quite lifeless. The bhaktas got alarmed; but presently his hair stood on end, indicating that he was alive. Sreebas now asked Nimai to explain why Advaita was in such a state.

Nimai replied: "Perhaps he has been blessed with the sight of Krishna within his heart and the external manifestations are due to that fact."

Sreebas muttered: "Lord, you would not appear before us as Sree Krishna although you shewed yourself in that form to Advaita in the secret recesses of his heart. But we are not

sorry for it, because it is enough for us to see you as you are." He then addressed the Lord : "May it please you to bring Advaita to his senses?"

"How can I, an humble individual," replied Nimai, "interfere with the work of Sree Krishna, and restore him to consciousness? Wait, and he will no doubt come to his senses without any assistance from me."

Shortly afterwards Advaita awoke from his trance. He now, like one roused from sleep, looked vacantly around him, and it appeared as if he had lost sight of something he had been looking at. He then began to rave in this fashion : "Where is the dark-complexioned, beautiful and bright figure that regaled my sight? His eyes beamed with love, and his whole body emitted an effulgence. Where is he, the delight of my eyes?"

While Advaita was thus feelingly describing the form of Krishna he seemed to be pouring nectar into the ears of his hearers. Every heart was moved by Advaita's graphic description of Krishna. Sreebas said : "Tell us clearly what whom you saw?"

By this time Advaita, having fully recovered his senses, plied, "It is all the doing of him," pointing to Nimai, "whom we see before us. As soon as I closed my eyes he entered into my heart and showed himself to me in the form of Sree Krishna and afterwards issued from thence as you see him now."

Sree Gauranga said : "You fell asleep and dreamt, and now you charge the whole matter to me?" Advaita said : "Was it a dream? I plainly saw you enter into my heart. Cast not upon me a veil of delusion, please. You are He Whom I worship."

Again Nimai blushed. He endeavoured to treat the whole matter as a joke. His bhaktas always avoided giving him pain by calling him Sree Krishna and they too sided with the Lord in treating Advaita's vision as only one which he had been permitted to see by the grace of God.

Though Advaita thus beheld the God whom he loved, he was soon to be pestered by fresh doubts about the divinity of Gauranga. Faith does not depend upon our will. Ocular proof is not enough. A successful test suggests another. Advaita's test was met, but it had no lasting effect upon him.* Faith is the result of a particular state of mind, which some attain to with ease and others after repeated failures. Or, it might be, that the doubt felt by Advaita was a part of the great plan of the Deity. Was it His object to shew by this doubting on the part of Advaita that He was not accepted lightly by those who were afterwards to be His followers, but that even the most un-believing, intellectual and hard-thinking of men, interested, as the head of the Vaishnavas, in discrediting the being who was to supplant him in his position, would, after repeated tests, believe in him?

* Miracles as a rule never produce a permanent effect upon the mind. Those who beheld the miracles of Christ continued to doubt his mission. Christ was accepted because of his character and his teachings and of the last great sacrifice and not for his miracles.

CHAPTER XIII.

PUNDARIK.

It was after this that Pundarik, the great saint of Chittagong, came to Nadia. He was a wealthy man with a numerous following, and lived like a wealthy man, but his heart was with Sree Krishna, and worldliness had not the slightest influence over him. He and Ramananda (of whom hereafter) proved to the world that a man can enjoy the good things of the world and can yet keep his bhakti intact. He came and unconditionally surrendered himself to Lord Gauranga. It was in this manner that the Lord attracted towards him, one by one, the greatest of the bhaktas that flourished at that time.

The saintly chroniclers, who have, for the good of humanity, left for us an account of the Leela of the Lord, boldly declare that some of these bhaktas had come down to earth with Him to accomplish His object. In proof of which they say that the bhaktas, who followed the Lord, were men such as the world had never seen. Each of them could be likened to a sun, enlightening the quarter in which he flourished.

Yes, each of them has a history of his own, and a wonderful history too. But we cannot afford to increase the bulk of our book by giving in detail the doings of the followers of the Lord.*

* The number of the principal companions and bhaktas of the Lord, that is on record, exceeds a thousand. All these were, from a worldly point of view, leading men of the time.

Indeed, we have to omit many of the Leelas of the Lord Himself for that reason. Those omitted now, will assuredly be supplied in future, either by my unworthy self, of which, however, there is little likelihood, or by others more able. We cannot, however, help giving an account of Haridas, a bhakta who played a most important part in this Leela, and who came to the Lord when he was, like Advaita his spiritual preceptor, an old man and one of the foremost saints of the time. He was an inhabitant of Buran, a place now included in the Bongong sub-division of Jessore. He was a Mussalman. But he became a follower of Sree Krishna, and won fame by his piety. His principal religious practice consisted in repeating aloud the name of Hari, day and night. Firm as a rock was his faith, and he believed that any one who took or even heard the name of Hari would be saved. Even the lower animals, he believed, would be delivered, if the sound of Hari entered their ears. For this reason he pronounced the name with a loud voice. He had built a hut in the Benapole jungles, near the present railway station of Bongong. His austere devotion became well known in that quarter. The rich Zemindar of the place, doubting the sincerity of the young and handsome saint, employed a public woman to see if he could be seduced. She approached him and was so much affected by his piety, that she became in turn a disciple of Haridas, and ever after led a life of austere piety. Haridas, leaving her to occupy his hut, proceeded elsewhere.

The Mussalman Cazi brought it to the notice of the Mahomedan ruler of that part of Bengal, that Haridas, though a Mussalman, had forsaken his religion, and become an "infidel." The Governor caused him to be arrested, and brought before him. The firm faith displayed by Haridas softened the heart of the Governor ; but the Governor's chief officer, Gorai, a bigoted Mahomedan, advised him to punish the saint. He urged

that if such infidelity were not put down with a strong hand, the spectacle of a Mussalman adopting the Hindu religion with impunity would produce a bad moral effect, prove humiliating to the Mussalman community, and be an insult to Mahomed. The Governor was, therefore, obliged, though reluctantly, to pass the sentence of death upon Haridas.

Though the sentence of death was passed upon him, the object of this persecution on his part was not to take Haridas's life, but to make him recant. It was feared that the mere apprehension of death would not be sufficient for the purpose. It was, therefore, proposed that he should be threatened with some form of cruel and slow torture.

The punishment with which Haridas was threatened, was one of the cruelest ever devised by man. It was provided that he should be led to one of the market-places and there unmercifully scourged. When this was done, he was to be taken to another market-place of the town and the scourging repeated. From there he was to be taken to another, and so on. In this manner, he was to be tortured in each of the twenty-two market-places which the town contained, and in the last until he died. It was believed that when Haridas had been once subjected to the lash, the punishment would induce him to recant, thereby rendering it unnecessary that he should be scourged again.

So, it was not only the prospect of death, but of a most horrible death, by slow torture, that was held out to the saint. Gorai then triumphantly addressed Haridas: "You see what is in store for you, if you persist in defying our authority. If the punishment inflicted in the first market-place fails to open your eyes to your folly, you will nevertheless have to yield eventually; for if you do not recant after the first scourging or the second, you will surely do so after the third or, at most, the fourth. Would it not then be better for you to yield at once? Therefore, read the Kalma (confession of faith) at once or take

the consequence. If you return to the fold you shall be provided with a good appointment under the Government."

Haridas was the gentlest creature in the world ; but when he was thus both tempted and threatened, he lost all patience and proudly declared :—

Were I to pieces hacked, body and soul,
Give up I would not Hari's sacred name.

Chaitanya-Bhagabat.

Of course, the challenge of Haridas highly offended the authorities. According to them, a renegade was an enemy of God Himself. A citizen who defied authority was also considered by despots as the greatest of offenders. And thus Haridas was taken to the market-place to be scourged.

Every one expected that he would quail before the horrible punishment with which he was threatened. But the heart of the saint was filled with other thoughts than his own sufferings. The great object of his life was the salvation of all, men and beasts. Like Advaita, he had also been praying for the salvation of his fellow-creatures. He was gentle, not only to his fellow-beings but to the meanest of God's creatures, an ant or a fly. He would not drive away even a mosquito which was sucking his blood. The chief regret, therefore, that filled his heart when he was being taken to be flogged was that all the men concerned in his suffering would be severely dealt with by God Almighty. He forgot his coming punishment in his distress at the thought of the severe punishment that would be dealt out to his torturers by the Father of all.

What passed through his mind appeared from his actions. He kept chanting the name of Hari loudly, as was the custom with him. His persecutors were, of course, there to see that he was flogged with severity. The spectators could not discover any trace of fear or anxiety in his face, though his look was melancholy. "Recant, or the scourge falls upon your back",

said his judges to whom he replied by uttering as usual the name of Hari. The lash falls with great severity upon his back. Haridas does not utter a groan or even wince, but repeats the holy name ; and again falls the lash upon his back !

Now men have oftentimes sacrificed themselves for God and this we know from the history of the martyrs. But martyrdom is absolutely impossible.* A man who essays to give up his life for God is protected by Him ; He is bound to save him. If then martyrs are found, it is because these so-called devotees of God have sacrificed themselves not for God but in order to indulge in their own vanity or pride. God reads men's hearts, and when He sees a sincere devotee sacrificing himself for His sake, He immediately protects him in His own way.

"Hari," says Haridas loudly, and immediately falls another severe lash on his back. A large crowd had gathered, the sacrifice had drawn men, women and children to the spot, for nothing attracts men more than to witness suffering in a good cause. The crowds shudder, Hindus and Mussalmans. The crowds shudder because they find before them a good man, a servant of God, mercilessly scourged for holding to his faith, and also because they apprehend disaster to the country. "God will not bear this," says one. "There will be an earthquake," says another, "and every one of us swallowed up. God never permits the strong to oppress the weak with impunity for any length of time ; the vengeance of the Lord is sure, if sometimes delayed." But when they looked at Haridas they forgot all their selfish feelings. How unapproachably high then he looked, how beautiful, how divine ! He was suffering for his Hari, and the idea sustained, nay, imparted a celestial joy to his soul. He absolutely forgot his own sufferings in his joy. This was so apparent that every one saw it, felt it, and therefore burst into tears.

* Of course, Jesus Christ was a martyr, but he was more than a man.

Yet Haridas had one sorrow in his mind. He was absolutely sure that his persecutors would be punished infinite times more severely than they were punishing him, so, in his simplicity, he tried to convince them of the folly of their act.

Said he, addressing his cruel tormentors in his sweet voice : "Refrain, brethren. What do you gain by beating me? And why do you beat me? I have done you no harm. Be you a Hindu or a Mussalman, you must all admit that it is wrong to hurt a living thing, and much more to inflict pain on a man who is innocent. Hari be my witness, I do not urge this because your lashes pain me, but because the thought overpowers me that you are, by your thoughtless act, bringing untold misery upon yourselves."

But his torturers, though some of them were visibly moved by the appeal of Haridas, had absolutely no choice in the matter. They must carry out the order or undergo the same punishment themselves. Haridas felt this, and so refraining from further addressing them, began to address himself to Him, Who is ever ready to listen to the prayers of the sorrowful. He opened his heart to God with the earnestness of a bhakta who vividly realized His presence and mercy. Said he loudly : "My Lord, my Lord ! Have pity, O thou fountain of mercy, upon these poor fellows ! Let not their offence against me be taken note of ! They are ignorant men, and cannot realize the enormity of their offence."*

* In the above prayer a few Biblical words have been used only to recall to the mind of the reader a parallel incident recorded in the holy book of the Christians. The precise words that Haridas used in his prayer are not to be found on record. Chaitanya-Bhagabat says :—"Haridas did not feel any pain on account of the lashes that fell upon him, he was only so ry for the future of the souls of the miscreants who scourged him ; he prayed to the Lord that their offence against him might be forgiven, and not only forgiven, but that they might be blessed by Him." Such parallel incidents are but

When he uttered this prayer, he did so in absolute faith that his prayer would be heard. The effort brought him in to the presence of the Lord, who was in his heart, and he at once entered into a state of ecstatic trance !

The effect of this loud prayer upon the by-standers was instantaneous and powerful. Every one was petrified with astonishment. Was Haridas joking ? Had he gone mad ? Had they heard him aright ? Were they awake or dreaming ? When they all realized the situation, when they found that the man whom the Mussalmans were scourging to death was fervently praying for the good of his cruel and pitiless tormentors, they all began to behave like mad men. Some danced, some wept, some offered to be whipped instead of the saint, and some began to curse his tormentors.

His tormentors, equally moved, found themselves paralysed. Luckily for them, the saint had then entered into a state of trance, and taking advantage of that opportunity, they gave out that he was dead, and threw him into the Ganges, very close to the bank. The plunge revived Haridas. On recovering his senses, he scrambled to the bank, and then a crowd surrounded the saint to crave his blessing. The Cazeer himself heard of the miracle, and came and fell at the feet of Haridas. The Cazeer, who at heart was not a bad man, now

natural in the lives of avatars, having the same errand. Thus parallel incidents are not wanting in the lives of Hannibal and Napoleon, both of whom crossed the Alps to invade Italy. Yet the most wonderful agreement is to be found between some of the incidents of the Old Testament of the Vaishnavas and the New Testament of the Christians. Krishna is the avatar in Sreemat Bhagabat. Christ is the avatar in the Bible. The two names are almost the same. The suggestion that Krishna has been transferred from the Bible, cannot be maintained. For the real hero of the Mahabharata is Krishna ; and it is an established fact that, that great book was written long before Christ was born.

perceiving that Haridas was really a saint, asked forgiveness for himself, which was most readily granted.

Haridas, one of the greatest bhaktas of the period, found in Advaita a greater one than he. He placed himself at the disposal of the latter. And Advaita, the prince of bhaktas, and Haridas, with a numerous following, found themselves swallowed up in the "ocean of love" which had been dug for them by that young Brahmin of twenty-three of Nadia ! As mighty streams feed the mightier Ganges, and this river with all its innumerable tributaries at last finds its identity lost in the ocean, so Advaita, with his innumerable followers, each pious enough to be able to purify the quarter in which he flourished, found himself merged in the young Pandit of Nadia, who, four or five months before, had not as yet gone through even one devotional exercise !

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DIFFERENT MOODS OF NIMAI.

As has been stated, the mood of Nimai changes frequently. He is now without God, he is again with God, and he is now God Himself. There was also another, his natural, state, in which Nimai was like other men, only the sweetest creature in existence. He was then a quiet man, simple as a child, affectionate as a mother, obliging as a devoted servant. He was then the meekest of men, with a very humble opinion of himself, and a very high opinion of others. He loved pleasant-ries, and his smiles were likened to the rays of the full moon. But he was very rarely found in this his natural state. There was another state in which he personated others, as, for instance, Akroor.

He was almost continuously, day and night, in that state which we shall call transcendental. When Sree Krishna was not with him, he felt like one who had suffered a most severe bereavement. He expressed the anguish of his soul in such a manner as to lead his companions to apprehend that his heart would break if Krishna did not appear and save his life by His presence. The agony of his heart is shown by frequent fits, one succeeding the other in rapid succession, when he falls down apparently a dead man, with his breath and the beating of his heart suspended, and his jaws locked.* Let us translate a passage from the lay of a bhakta, describing his state when

* Swoons are brought about either by excess of joy or excess of sorrows.

Nimai was without Krishna. The translation is free. Says Nimai, in the midst of choking sobs, while holding the neck of a companion :

“My friend ! I fear I am dying. Will you be able to save my life to-day ? You advise me to be patient. My friend, I do try my utmost, but my heart does not obey me. Let me go, let me go to my Krishna. Why do you detain me ? Let me go, or I shall die.”

Nimai then makes an effort to go to Krishna, and falls down in a deadly swoon !

But suddenly he finds his Krishna and then the joy that he expresses is simply indescribable. Indeed, then he dances with joy like a mad being. Let us again seek the help of constant companions who have left in songs a description of the ecstatic state of Nimai. We have thousands and thousands of such songs. Here is one :

“My beautiful Nimai had dressed himself in exquisite taste to meet his beloved Krishna. Tears of joy were rolling from his lotus-like eyes to the earth, making it muddy. Joy overflowed his heart and he danced, making the whole universe dance with him. He says : ‘Lo ! my beloved husband is come,’ and falls down in an ecstatic trance.”

In the midst of such states of ecstasy the Lord now and then revealed Himself. Sometimes He remained revealed even for hours together and sometimes only for minutes. When the Lord revealed Himself, no body could tell how long He would remain so revealed. Sometimes He would appear in the midst of a conversation, utter a word and disappear. Thus, for instance, Murari was having a simple talk with him, and Nimai was then in his human state. Nobody expected any manifestation just then, but suddenly the whole aspect of Nimai was changed. His presence became awe inspiring, his tone commanding, and his body emitted the light which it always

did whenever the Lord revealed Himself. This light sometimes appeared as strong as "ten million suns ;" but sometimes in a very mild form. Murari and every one there present expected that the Lord meant to do or say something, and He did say something. He said : "The Sannyasi of Benares, Prokasananda, is teaching dangerous doctrines. I shall teach him a lesson."

Now this Prokasananda, the foremost Sannyasi of the time, then a resident of Benares, was teaching Advaitabadi, that is to say, the doctrine of "He and I are the same," a doctrine which was fatal to the religion of bhakti, which Nimai was teaching. Well, the Lord uttered this threat against Prokasananda in the midst of an ordinary conversation. When this threat was uttered the Lord again concealed Himself within Nimai, and then Nimai began to speak as if nothing had happened to him, he himself not being aware of the momentary trance that had seized him !

What he spoke as the Lord he did not remember as a man, or only entertained a faint recollection of it in his human state. It appeared to his bhaktas that Nimai was in a state of constant anxiety lest he, in his state of trance, should in any way speak blasphemously or otherwise behave sacrilegiously towards God. He knew that he was subject to fainting fits, and he knew that in that state he spoke and sometimes acted in an extraordinary manner. He characterized the words that he uttered during a state of trance as his "ravings," and he always implored his companions to prevent him in his state of trance from doing or saying anything that might be displeasing to God. His bhaktas, therefore, never breathed a word to him when he was in his human state as to what he had uttered as the Lord Almighty.

In the beginning, when the Lord revealed Himself, the incident was preceded by some previous indications in Nimai's behaviour. As a rule he would, first of all, pass through a

period of unconsciousness before announcing that it was He Who was addressing those attending on Him. Gradually these divine revelations began to be more frequent and more easy. We shall now give a description of the Maha Prokas or Great Revelation when the Lord remained visible to the bhaktas for a period of twenty-one hours !

One day, after he had bathed, the Lord suddenly revealed Himself. It was at the house of Sreebas. Some thing very remarkable occurred on this occasion. For Nimai, without first losing consciousness as was usual with him, seated himself on the Vishnu dais within the house, as if it was the most natural thing for him to do. He ordered the bhaktas to chant hymns. There were screens on the doors and windows, but the room was as usual lighted up by the mild effulgence of the Lord's body, so that it seemed as if it were filled with the sunshine of noon. Gadadhar decorated his person with flower-garlands and flower-ornaments. Nityananda held an umbrella over his head. Narahari waved the chamar.*

The Lord, seated on a fine cushion, which was placed on the dais, not only removed all His own awfulness by His smile, but completely fascinated all by His indescribable loveliness. He on whom the Lord cast a glance, felt Him as much within his heart as he saw Him without. They felt that He was both in their hearts and before them.

What poets had imagined, what painters had delineated, what saints had dreamt, the elect of Nadia actually realized : They found themselves face to face with the Lord Almighty !

* The dais of Vishnu means the seat on which the Image of God is placed. It would be an act of great sacrilege for a human being to sit or allow a human being to sit on it. The bhaktas, as Hindus, would have risked their souls if they had permitted any mere mortal being to sit on it ; and they would never have permitted Nimai to occupy it, if they had any doubt about his being Krishna.

The bhaktas, plunged "in a sea of happiness", engaged themselves in worshipping Him with toolsi leaves, clothes of various colors, gold, silver and various other things.

They also worshipped Him with another flower, plucked from their heart, which was Love! And what an overpowering love they felt for the lovely Being before them! They could then have died "one hundred thousand deaths" to satisfy His slightest wish. Then for the first time they learnt what the four letters which make the word "love" actually meant. People say they love, but to love even in a slight degree is a privilege which is enjoyed by very few men on this earth. To love is to love God alone, for man cannot feel love in its purest form for his fellow-men, as man is an imperfect being. The only object of true love, therefore, is He Who then sat face to face with His creatures at the house of Sreebas. The bhaktas felt themselves maddened by their love for the Being before them.

On that day the door was kept open, every one having permission to see the Lord, yet the number of outsiders was not very large. Those who came surrendered themselves absolutely, for to see was to believe. The bhaktas flocked in from all sides, each engrossed with his own thoughts, each determined to do his duty, to shew his love, and to relieve his surcharged heart,—the heart surcharged with an irresistibly kindly feeling towards Him. "How good He is, how incomparably delectable my Lord is", thought every one in his heart, not only thought, but realized.

Hundreds of men and women shower flowers at His feet, throw garlands round His neck, recite mantras, and repeat prayers all at the same time. Yet there is no confusion. All are absorbed in the Deity, and take no notice of one another. Every one thinks that he and his Lord are the two persons present in the room, and that he has been looking at the Lord and the Lord looking at him. No one is aware of the noise made by others. Hundreds of persons are speaking to the Lord.

Yet there is absolute peace and quiet in the house. The union between the souls is complete, the one is absorbed in the other. Yet they feel that they are separate entities !

Those present address Him as Lord, Master, Krishna, and so forth, each in language which occurs to him. Some one offers a garland saying, "I offer this flower wreath to Thee. Be pleased to wear it round Thy neck." Thereupon the Lord, taking off the garland which He had on His neck, places it round the neck of the bhakta, and then, bending His head forward, allows the bhakta similarly to decorate Him.

Some one runs to the market to buy a fine silken dhooti, and then returning to the Lord's presence, offers it to Him. The Lord, putting on the cloth given Him, graciously takes off His own dhooti and presents it to the worshipper. The bhakta winds up the cloth round his head and dances with joy. In this way the bhaktas offer presents to the Lord and in return receive presents from Him. The Lord remains under debt to no one.

But why do they offer presents to God who is Almighty? It is because He is before them as a man, and because they feel an intense longing to serve Him. They are all men, and they can only serve as men do. So they give him food to eat. Indeed, they brought delicious things, placed them before the Lord, and prayed to Him to partake of them. They all ran to the bazar to purchase fruits, sweets and innumerable things. There was before the Lord such fruits as mangoes, jack-fruits and bananas, etc, procurable in that season : there were different preparations of milk ; there were pastrys, cakes, in short, every thing to be had at that time in the city.

It is not altogether an easy affair for man to personate the Lord. Merely besmearing himself with phosphoric light and sitting on the dais of Vishnu will not make God of a man. It may be possible for a man to throw a spell over another and

enchain him for a time, but then to extort the consideration, which is due to the All-wise and All-powerful God, for any length of time, from hundreds, is a feat, which it is simply impossible for a human being to accomplish. They brought offerings before Him which would have satisfied the hunger of "thousands of men." They all began to press the Lord to partake of them !

He agreed with a smile. When He agreed to oblige one bhakta, He was bound to oblige another, for he was the Father of all, and He had no excuse for partaking of the offering of one, and refusing that of another. Then every bhakta pressed the Lord to take every thing that he had brought, and the good Lord, who is the most obliging Being in existence, could not command the rudeness to refuse any thing offered Him. For pious men, his servants, had been proclaiming the fact from time immemorial, that He refuses nothing offered Him by His bhaktas. Thus He was obliged to partake of everything that was offered to Him.

He agreed to oblige every bhakta, and therefore had to accept everything offered to Him, and so He partook of all. Here then was a miracle which the Lord was obliged to perform because He had then no excuse for refusing the offerings presented to Him. It was thus that, "He, in a short time, partook of food sufficient to have filled thousands of men," says Chaitanya Bhagabat.

Now the followers of Sree Gauranga have no great opinion of miracles. Indeed, according to the Hindus generally, miracle-working is not at all a great feat. According to them every one, who has studied the secret art, can perform it. Besides, according to them there are some who naturally possess occult powers. Lord Gauranga could never have persuaded His followers to accept Him as God Almighty, if He had only or mainly to depend upon His miracles for the accomplishment of that

object. Of course, He had to perform miracles when it was absolutely necessary for the accomplishment of a purpose. As for instance, when he appeared as the Lord Almighty He had to show that He had not only all the power, but also all the

1. But His miracles served His cause very little. When miracles were, by chance, witnessed by outsiders they did them to His knowledge of the occult sciences. Even His own bhaktas did so in the beginning, as, for even Mukunda, his life-long companion.*

He is naturally sceptical. Those who easily believe do not believe at all. Only they have not the clear sight to be able to analyse their minds, and find that when they proclaim miracles they only make known that they are ignorant of the occult mind. Men say they believe but when put to the test they come to know that they do not believe at all. I believe in the next world, says one. Why then does he fear to face death? I believe in Christ, says one. But why then does he fight, cheat and oppress a fellow-being? The saying is that a Vaishnava is known by his character. So the faith of a Christian is known by his dealings with his fellow-beings. When a man sees a miracle he is not convinced but bewildered. Gradually he seems to doubt whether what he has seen is a miracle at all. It is, therefore, utterly impossible for a man to extort the respect which is due to God Almighty by the help of miracles. The divinity of Sree Gauranga was based upon other considerations than miracles. True belief comes very slowly.

* I have referred to Prakasananda, the most respected Sannyasi in India at the time. He and Sarababhauma, being the two foremost men in India then, knew each other very well. When Sarababhauma was converted by Sree Gauranga, Prakasananda was surprised, and he attributed this miracle to the occult powers that the Lord possessed. Indeed, he continued to entertain a very mean opinion of the Lord until he saw Him and then he was converted.

Even those who had accepted Gauranga as God Almighty at night, doubted him the following morning. The career of Advaita will show how the minds of the bhaktas of the Lord were alternately affected by faith and disbelief.

As we said above, miracles followed his steps everywhere, but they came naturally. As for instance, when He appeared as the Lord God He could no longer excuse Himself under the plea that the eatables that would suit thousands of men would be too much for a single individual like Him. So He had to consume them all.

But to return : The first few hours were passed in utter confusion, for His companions were utterly bewildered by the incident before them. Gradually they came to realize the situation, and they saw that the material world had almost disappeared from their eyes. Their eyes were riveted on the Lord. He was on the dais. He was no doubt Nimai, but His body seemed to be made up of electricity, of a yellowish white light, which though more brilliant than the rays of the mid-day sun, did not hurt the eyes in the least, but so soothed and pleased them that it was ecstasy in itself to behold it. They further saw that light was emitted not only from the person of the Lord, but from every one present there. Indeed, it was seen that light was being emitted from every substance there, the stools, the utensils, the clothing ; in fact, everything was covered and suffused with luminosity, even the atmosphere of the room.*

They then gazed at the Lord. He sat silent as a statue and seemed to be looking at every one at the same time. Indeed, every one saw that His eyes were upon him. And what a gaze that was ! That gaze showed unutterable love ! They found that the Being before them was exceedingly good, that

* This luminous substance remained even when the Lord had left the place, and sometimes for days together. But of this in its proper place.

He was beyond the influence of evil, that He was without guile, and absolutely pure. They felt that He had no misery, no sorrow, but, on the other hand, was swimming, as it were, in an ocean of happiness.

The worshippers of God, having tasted a particle of joy, have called Him All-joy. Now, this is an expression which conveys no definite idea to the mind. But the bhaktas present realized it. Says Kavi Karnapur in his Chaitanya Chandrodaya : The Lord was sitting quiet, quietly enjoying the ecstasy which always accompanies Him. As on the broad ocean wave follows wave in incessant succession, so the Lord was seen to be affected by an incessant flow of joy. It seemed to the bhaktas that His joy had no end, but was as boundless as the ocean.

Those present found in Him their long-lost friend. Men are always in search of something. They know that they are unhappy, ill at ease, and discontented. A maid thinks that a good marriage will bring peace to her mind ; when it comes it does not remove her restlessness. A poor man thinks that riches will soothe his soul ; a tyrant believes that absolute power will render him secure and happy, but experience proves to them that the soul hankers after something else than riches or power. When, however, the bhaktas found the Lord, they came to realize that though they had not known it, it was His absence that had been the cause of their restlessness and unhappiness—a state which is to be found in every man. And when they found Him, they felt that they had found their long lost treasure, the mate of their soul, the want of whom always kept them, unknown to themselves, in search of something unknown. In the Lord, they at last found their “own,” so long lost to them*—their soul’s eternal partner.

* Men try to find happiness in wealth, power, praise of their fellows, love, etc., but they never get it. They search for it here and there because

And what a charming friend ! His beauty brought tears to their eyes. The fragrance from His body maddened their olfactory nerves. His grace, His elegance, the intelligence, goodness, benevolence and love that beamed through His beautiful person from head to foot, began to attract the hearts of those present, "as an angler attracts a fish."

The sweetness of the All-sweet is too much for human beings to bear, and the bhaktas were having too much of it. The Lord perceiving this wanted to give them some relief, and He spoke. His tone was commanding, and it seemed that He was quite conscious that there was none in the universe to dispute His authority. But yet His voice was sweeter than music, and His sentiments considerate, condescending, generous and tender. Indeed, it seemed that He was incapable of finding fault, and that, in His opinion every one before Him was as guileless, as good, as disinterestedly loving as He Himself was. He addressed Sreebas. He showed him and others that He knew everything about him (Sreebas). He gave an account of some very important events which had occurred to Sreebas during his life but which were secrets to every body. Sreebas was convinced that the Being before him knew all the secrets of his heart. He then addressed Advaita and in a similar manner told him some of the past events of his life. Advaita was convinced that the Being on the dais knew everything regarding him. He then addressed another and another.

The day was thus passed, and night came on. The bhaktas one and all, were now delirious with joy. Numerous lamps were thrown into the shade by the effulgence of the Lord's body—

they know not the cause of their restlessness. Their souls are, unknown to them, attracted towards the Fountain from which they had sprung, and this is the cause of the feeling of want that makes every man restless. The soul without God is in the position of a loving but bereaved wife.

the effulgence, which seemed mild at day-time on account of the sun-light, became very brilliant on the approach of night. The light, emitted from the bodies of Nitai, who held the umbrella, and other bhaktas, as well as from the inanimate objects around, received additional lustre at the approach of darkness.

It was now time to do Arati to the Lord Almighty. Sreebas thought that this ceremony ought to be performed by Shachee herself. So he addressed Advaita and said, "Goswami, is it not meet that the Arati should be performed by the mother of the Lord?" "Besides," said he with a smile, "the simple lady has all along entertained a notion that we, elderly men, have spoiled her youthful son. Let her now come and see that it is not we that have spoiled her son, but that it is her son who is spoiling us." Advaita, too, smiled and approved of the proposal, and so Shachee was brought.

She entered the room, and seeing her son, stood speechless and trembling. She saw at once that her supposed son was God Almighty. But did the knowledge please or gratify her? Certainly not. If the bhaktas found in the Lord their long lost treasure, she at once realized that she had lost her dearest object of love! Did she not love her child, so beautiful, so full of excellences, so affectionate to her? Was it not for her son that she had forgotten her bereavements, and become the happiest woman in the world? This dear object now slips away from her maternal bosom! He is no longer "the son of Shachee," but the Father of all! He is no longer her exclusive property, but a property to which every one had equal right!

In the midst of these painful thoughts she came to remember that she had chastised her son, and treated Him as an inferior. And would she be forgiven for having followed the Lord Almighty with a cane in hand? As we said, she stood trembling and speechless, a prey to diverse and contradictory feelings, and

not at all gratified by seeing her son raised to so exalted a position.

As for the Lord He took no more notice of her than He did of the others. Seeing this, Sreebas addressed her : "What are you doing, lady ? Why do you hesitate ? Go to Him, do not you see that He is not your son, but the Father of all ? Go to Him and prostrate yourself before Him."

So Shachee fell prostrate before Him, whom she had hitherto regarded as her son. And the Being who had hitherto treated Shachee as His mother, saluting her with the humblest of submission as often as He met her, now planted His foot upon her hoary head.*

Shachee, as soon as she came in contact with the sacred foot of the Lord, found herself violently affected. A thrill of joy passed through her frame and she could not resist the temptation of expressing it by dancing ! A dance by a Hindu lady and advanced in age before spectators and strangers was too horrible a scandal to be permitted. She was thus restrained by Sreebas. Here another miracle was performed. Shachee knew not Sanskrit, yet she uttered the couplet in the Sreemat Bhagabat which contains the prayer of Devakee to the new-born Krishna.

Shachee, Malinee and other elderly ladies then performed the ceremony of Arati, which is worshipping by lights. This done, Shachee was permitted to go home.

When the bhaktas come to the Lord, they awaited His commands in the verandah. Without permission no one ventured to go in. Mukunda, the dearest of Nimai's disciples, was in this manner waiting His commands. Suddenly the Lord ordered

* For an inferior to put his foot upon a superior is a gross sacrilege. For a son to put his foot upon the head of his mother is the grossest sacrilege of all that could be conceived by a Hindu. But the Being who did it was not the son of Shachee, but her Father and the Father of all.

the bhaktas to bring Sreedhar. This poor man, who supplied plantain leaves and pith and the like to Nimai, as has been stated before, was too insignificant a man to be known to the companions of Nimai. So they wanted to know who he was. The Lord gave them specific directions as to how he should be found, namely, that if they proceeded in a certain direction, they would find a man loudly repeating the name of Sree Krishna, and that that man was Sreedhar. As for Sreedhar, a former object of Nimai's pleasantries, he had come to know that his tormentor, the Pandit, had turned a pious man, and that he was regarded even as Sree Krishna Himself by many. But he had not ventured to approach him. Now the summons came to him that the Lord God Krishna, Shachee's son, wanted him ! Sreedhar would have most readily come, but as soon as he heard the message he fainted away !

The bhaktas had, therefore, to carry him to the Lord, in the midst of the jeers of those who had the privilege of seeing poor Sreedhar being carried on the shoulders of highly respectable men. When brought into the presence of the Lord, however, Sreedhar awoke from his trance. He at first saw that it was the Brahmin youth, his tormentor, that was sitting on the dais. But he found that the youth transformed himself into Sree Krishna. The spectacle bewildered him and he stood speechless.

Said the Lord, "Do you now see who took your things by force ? It is in this manner that I deal with those who love me ! I show them in this manner that mine is theirs and theirs is mine. Of course, hitherto I have treated yours as mine, it is now time for me to show that mine is also yours."

Sreedhar was not then in a mood to enjoy a pleasantry. He said, in the midst of sobs, "Lord, you revealed yourself to me more than once. Did you not tell me that you were the Father of the Ganges ? But I, a fool, did not understand you."

"Now, Sreedhar," said the Lord, "it is time for me to repay you for all the things I took from you by force. Ask a *bar*. Mind, you shall have whatever you want, for I have to pay fully for your plantain leaves."

Sreedhar declined positively to have anything to do with gifts, or, indeed, to be merry. He stuck to his serious mood. Then the Lord said, "You have spent your days in poverty. You have served me faithfully. I must ask you to spend your latter days in opulence and power. Let me, Sreedhar, make you then the lord of an empire."

Sreedhar smiled. He smiled to express his contempt for the gift offered; he would have nothing, not even an empire. Said he: "My Lord, do not tempt me. It is not meet that you should tempt an humble creature like me. A poor despised man like me has no doubt a hankering after wealth and power. But I do not want sovereignty or anything."

The Lord again offered him an empire and again he declined.

When Sreedhar rejected an empire offered him by the Lord,—Sreedhar, the poorest of the poor, who had spent his whole life in a state of semi-starvation,—the bhaktas naturally raised a shout of admiration. Now, it must be borne in mind that if Sreedhar was really a half-starved poor man and an object of contempt to those better circumstanced, the rest of those present had no doubt of the fact that God Almighty was seated in their midst, and was prepared to remove the sorrows of the man. To them there was nothing theatrical in this offer of an empire by the Lord and its rejection by Sreedhar; to them it was a stern reality. What they saw was that an empire was placed at his disposal and that poor Sreedhar flung it away as a thing of no worth !*

* A man of the world may here suggest that Sreedhar might have asked the Lord to free Bengal from the Mussalman yoke. But those, who have realized in

The Lord was mightily pleased at the attitude of Sreedhar, so worthy of a bhakta, but yet he did not just then show it. So he said: "But, Sreedhar, you know, my words cannot go for nothing. I wanted you to ask a *bar*: You must ask one. If you don't desire an empire, let me know what else you want."

Sreedhar pondered; he had got everything, he had nothing more to ask; but he must also obey the Lord's command. So he said, "Then grant me this: Let that young and beautiful Brahmin who took away my plantain leaves, etc, by force, also take possession of my entire heart and let Him make His permanent abode there!"

The Lord looked at him tenderly and could scarcely restrain His tears. He said: "I knew, Sreedhar, you would treat with contempt even the offer of an empire. So it was only to tempt you that I made it. It was only to show that while for sovereignty people risk everything, even their future life, the poorest of bhaktas would not accept it even when offered by Me!"

An empire was offered to Sreedhar, because he was the poorest of the poor. It was to show that bhakti was infinite-times more valuable than sovereignty. It was to show men that those who jeopardise their souls for the acquirement of property or sovereignty are foolish.

their minds that man's connection with this world is of short duration, place no value whatsoever upon what is called worldly prosperity. The Brahmins in India in days gone by enjoyed unlimited powers. Why did they then prefer the wilderness to palaces and thrones? A high Brahmin who agreed to serve as minister was considered a fallen man. The greatest Brahmin minister in India was Chanakya and he left society and lived the latter days of his life in the jungles, in religious exercises, avowedly for the purification of his soul. Rup and Sonatan, after enjoying almost sovereign powers in Bengal, left society at the bidding of Lord Gauranga. So did Raghunath who was a Prince. Political aspirations have no place in the hearts of men who are "free." It is of very little moment to such people who govern the country.

The Lord had a talk with Murari, one of the chroniclers of His early Leela. Murari was a worshipper of Ram and Sita. Meek, philanthropic, pious, Murari had no superior on earth. "Murari, look at me," said the Lord. Murari looked up and saw that there was no Nimai Pandit, but in His place Ram and his consort Sita were sitting on a throne. The beautiful spectacle was too much for Murari, and he fainted away.

The reassuring words of the Lord, however, roused him from the trance. Said the Lord: "Murari, I implore you, give up the study of fruitless occult philosophies." Murari, a little disconcerted, said: "Are they not good? Do they not teach religious truth?" "Good or bad, that is not the question," replied the Lord. "But those researches into the realms of occultism will not lead any one to find Me." Murari, forgetting the Presence, for he was after all a man, ventured to suggest that a caution from the Lord was unnecessary, as there was no one to teach him occult philosophy. The Lord retorted with the remark, "Yes, you have a teacher in Kamalakshya," which was the original name of Advaita Acharjya.*

The fact is, the object of the Lord was not to give a lesson to poor Murari but to Advaita Acharjya, who had yet some pride left in him, because of his knowledge of the secrets of the occult sciences. So to avoid hurting the feelings of the great saint Advaita, the Lord chose to

* Here the Lord refers to the Tantra and other occult sciences which had then taken possession of the minds of the learned men of India. What the Lord meant was that researches into the secrets of occultism may have their uses, but they do not train one in bhakti and therefore do not lead one to God. Those engaged in these researches, may possibly sometimes discover truths not known before, that is all; but to attain to the Personal God or Krishna there is but one way, through faith, reverence and love, and that way is not paved but retarded by the cultivation of the occult sciences.

teach him by addressing Murari. The Lord then explained that to love God and to be loved by God was an object quite distinct from the knowledge of the soul and its capacities. The scientists of Nadia were then deeply engaged in dissecting the soul, forgetting altogether the fact that they had another more important duty, which was to save their souls by directing them to the lotus feet of the Great Centre, towards which all progressive beings are tending. Mere culture of the occult sciences will not save a soul from its downfall unless it has created for itself an attraction Upwards. Advaita felt himself humbled.

Haridas was called. His mission on earth was to teach humility to mankind and resignation. He had prayed for the salvation of those who were scourging him to death. He stood before the Lord, a very humble creature, with folded hands. Said the Lord: "Haridas, you have suffered much for me. It is now my turn to show you that I appreciate your devotion. Ask a *bar*, anything you will, the sovereignty of the whole universe is at your disposal."

Haridas said: "Great Lord, you know the secret of my heart. The more you reveal yourself to me, the more I come to realize my unworthiness. Thou art purity, I am a lump of filth. Thou art good, I am wicked. My Lord, when Thou speakest to me in kindly terms I am overpowered by shame. Let me have only this *bar* that I may never forget my own unworthiness. My Lord, if Thou wilt give me a *bar*, make me the abject servant of all Thy servants." Saying this he rolled on the ground in the violence of his feelings.

The Lord said: "Rise, Haridas, rise, I implore you. Your humility simply rends my heart. The most pleasant being to me is he who, though great, is yet unconscious of it. Yes, it is from you that men must learn to be meek and forbearing, but yet rise, beloved Haridas, rise. There is

not one servant of mine in the whole universe for whom I have a greater regard than for yourself. Yes, you were cruelly scourged by those wicked men and you suffered for my sake. When they scourged you, you prayed to me to forgive them. Now, it is not my way to reject the prayer of a sincere bhakta. But yet, that is not the only or main reason why I did not punish your tormentors, Haridas. It would have been the easiest thing for me to have protected you from the lashes. But if I had done so, the world would have lost an example. The object of your existence is the salvation of the human race. You, a frail man, have done a deed which has no parallel. You not only forgave those who were scourging you to death, but prayed to me to shower my blessings upon them ! Now, Haridas, I am not the being to throw obstacles in the way of the performance of so noble a deed. Yet, when they began to scourge you, I thought I had a duty to perform in your behalf. So what I did was to take you into my bosom, so that the scourges might not fall on your back. You, Haridas, can testify to the fact that the lash did not give you any pain."

When the Lord had ended speaking, the bhaktas tried to express their acknowledgements, but they found themselves overpowered. They felt very much humiliated ; they felt that they had hitherto led a very ungrateful life by forgetting so good and affectionate a master, and they felt also that the human race was altogether ungrateful.

They also felt how much the good Lord had been libelled by His ignorant creatures ! They had given Him a character after their own model ; they had made Him, in fact, a frightful tyrant. But how good, how incomparably good He was ! They resolved that if they lived they would spend their days only in proclaiming His goodness to His ignorant creatures. The Lord in this manner addressed His bhaktas one by one. He wanted to give *bar* to every one who asked it. He then ordered them

to throw open the doors, and bring every one from the town who wanted to see Him. "Let those who have doubts come and see," proclaimed the Lord. His commands were to go through the streets and tell every one they met that He was come and that any one was free to come and see Him.

Those who were present had no doubt in their minds that it was the Lord Almighty that was speaking to them. So they disdained to ask Him for anything transient, such as, for instance, worldly goods. The presence of the Lord had taken away from their minds all traces of worldliness. So when the Lord offered to give *bar*, almost all chose bhakti, either for themselves or for their dear ones. One having a father, who was a sceptic, prayed that his heart might be drawn towards Him. One prayed that his son, who was a gambler, might be cured of his vicious habits. When Advaita was asked to take a *bar* he prayed that the nectar, prem and bhakti, which the Lord had brought from Goloke for mankind, might be distributed to all, irrespective of creed, color or caste!

Mukunda was, however, weeping outside. Angelic as he was by nature, he also sang like an angel. He was an ascetic from his infancy. He was a bhak'ta before the Lord had revealed Himself. Nimai loved him, and he on his part followed his great friend, like a shadow. But why was Mukunda outside? He was there sitting in the verandah, a picture of utter despair! The Lord was within, and Mukunda was able to hear every word that was being spoken there. He was cognizant of all that was being said and done inside, but he was not allowed to take any part therein, because the Lord had not called him.

It gradually became evident to all who were present that the Lord was deliberately ignoring Mukunda, and they pitied him. They held a secret consultation amongst themselves. Sreebas ventured to put in a word on his behalf. He addressed

the Lord, and boldly said: "My Lord, forgive my impertinence ; but every one has been blessed by Thee excepting Thy Mukunda." The Lord instantly replied saying, "My Mukunda ? Who told you that he was my Mukunda ?"

Sreebas : "Not Thine ? Whose is he then ? The world knows that he is Thine, and Thine alone. He is the singer of Thy glories ; what man is there who has not been moved by his songs about Thee ?"

The Lord: "Yes, he is a bhakta when in your midst. I know all that ; but I also know that he is a philosopher when in the midst of savants who teach anti-bhakti doctrines. He has no firm faith in anything, certainly not in Me."

The angry reply of the Lord fell like a thunderbolt upon all who heard it, for Mukunda was the beloved of all ; but more especially upon the unfortunate Mukunda himself. The Lord God was within, He was blessing every one with a liberality which knew no bounds. Mukunda heard all, he heard what Sreebas urged on his behalf and what the Lord said in reply. This led him to think profoundly about his condition. At last he broke the silence by addressing Sreebas. Said he : "Do not intercede for me, Pandit. The Lord is just, and my punishment is much lighter than my offence."

Mukunda was quite sincere in what he said, and it was not mock humility that led him to admit his offence. Indeed, he was then in a very happy frame of mind. The remarks of the Lord had led him into it. For he felt that the Lord loved him or He would not have spoken with such kind solicitude about him. "Yes," thought he, "that is His way ; His punishment means only love. But I must chastise this unworthy body of mine which has become polluted by imbibing infidel doctrines. Yes, die I must. And then the Lord God will take me unto His bosom. But when will that time come, when the Lord will again accept me as His servant ?"

He again addressed Sreebas. He said : "Do not, please, intercede for me ; only ask the Lord to tell me, if He will condescend to do so, whether He will ever allow me to see Him?"

The Lord seemed moved to tears by the question of Mukunda ; but He spoke aloud this time, addressing Mukunda: "Mukunda, you shall certainly see Me, but after ten million births."

This meant that Mukunda must die and be born again ten millions of times before the process of purification was complete that would entitle him to see the Lord ! To a puny creature like Mukunda the time that he was asked to wait before he should be permitted a sight of the Lord practically meant eternity. It was the cruelest blow conceivable for Mukunda, more especially when we consider that the Lord, who hurled the fiat, was only a few yards off. But Mukunda did not view the matter in that light at all. He heard the sentence passed upon him, and he began, calmly enough, to analyse his position. So engrossed was he with the circumstances of his position that he utterly forgot his surroundings, even the presence of the Lord, and freely unburthened his heart aloud. Said he to himself : "Yes, He is so good, so merciful !"

The bhaktas present had heard the sentence passed upon Mukunda and it seemed to them so unusual that they felt bewildered. Mukunda was dear to them, so was the Lord. They felt in their heart of hearts that the Lord was dealing rather severely with Mukunda, but the idea was blasphemous, and they did not venture to indulge it. They, however, could not help sympathising profoundly with the unfortunate Mukunda. When, therefore, he talked of the "mercy" of the Lord, after his severe sentence, they could not see in His dealings with Mukunda where the mercy lay.

Yet Mukunda was never more sincere in his life than when he talked of the mercy of the good Lord. Indeed, if the

sentence was felt as a thunderbolt by the others, to Mukunda it appeared like a choice blessing worthy of the fountain of all goodness and mercy. So he began to mutter to himself, utterly forgetful of the presence of the Lord and of the bhaktas. "Yes, He is merciful. Here I have a clear and distinct promise from Him, that He will allow me again to look on Him. I must now pronounce myself to be the happiest man in the universe. He says, I shall see Him, that is quite certain. He says that I cannot see Him now. But what of that? See Him I shall, for He has promised. Ten millions of births may seem to be long, but are as nothing when compared to eternity. So, Mukunda, take heart, you shall see Him again." Saying this he actually stood up to dance; he began to dance in the verandah with uplifted hands, a picture of supreme happiness, exclaiming, "I shall see him," "He has promised it."

The scene was too much for the bhaktas who all burst into tears, which Mukunda observed, but he could not understand the cause. Said he to the bhaktas innocently: "Why do you weep at this moment of my supreme happiness?" Mukunda was so happy that he could not understand the cause of the sorrow of his friends. He had expected that his friends would congratulate him on his good fortune and was surprised to see them immersed in sorrow.

The golden Figure, on the sacred dais, was taking a keen interest in what was going on in the verandah. When Mukunda began to dance, exclaiming the while, "I shall see Him," the lotus eyes of the Lord shed tears, and emotion filled His heart. He managed, however, to issue an order to Mukunda.

Said He: "Mukunda, come in."

But Mukunda was not then in a condition to hear a command addressed to him, even by the Lord. His ecstasy, at the thought that he would see the Lord hundreds of millions of years thence, had not only blinded him, but also had closed his ears.

The bhaktas, however, caught hold of the dancing figure and sought to restrain him. This interruption Mukunda did not like, and he resented it in these words : "Why do you stop me? Have you not heard the promise of the Lord? He will allow me to see Him after ten millions of births." They all, however, dragged him before the Lord.

The Lord said, in a voice broken with emotion : "Mukunda, forgive me for the pleasantry. You have conquered me, though I must tell you I was only trying your faith. Not even exactly that. I wanted to show to the world what metal my bhaktas are made of. I also wanted to show that if I am master of all, I have also my master in my bhaktas. Did I not tell you that I would not be visible to you, till you had passed through ten millions of births? But where is my resolve gone? One word of yours has driven that resolution out of my heart. You must know, Mukunda, that it is not my custom to be fault-finding with my people, nor to exact vengeance for their short-comings, whatever ignorant persons may say to the contrary. No, Mukunda, men do me wrong by judging me by their own standard. Forgiveness rather than the exaction of revenge is my nature. Now, Mukunda, you know that my resolve is unalterable, and so, you believed for certain that you would be deprived of the privilege of seeing me for millions of years. Yet your faith in me was not shaken. On the other hand, the prospect of seeing me after millions of years threw you into an ecstasy of joy. Mukunda, I have scarcely a bhakta like you. Now raise your head, look at me, and let us be friends again."

Through the whole of that day the Lord remained revealed. Midnight approached, and He was still on the dais. But now He assumed a different attitude. Advaita had wanted to see the mightiness of the Lord for his own belief, and accordingly the Lord had shown Himself as the Almighty in the act of being worshipped by myriads of celestial beings. This sight

had filled Advaita with despair of ever being able to attain to Him,* but the Lord now withdrew all His mightiness and appeared to the bhaktas in his loveliness, pure and simple. The Almighty Lord disappeared, but the All-sweet Lord remained.

The senses open to us the doors of pleasure, but the pleasure does not come. A fine scent may give a momentary pleasure through the olfactory nerves, but these soon get accustomed to it, and convey no further pleasure to the sense after a short enjoyment. So in the case of a beautiful sight, the eyes soon become used to it, and then it palls. In the Lord at last they found an object for the gratification of their senses. They gazed at Him, and tears of joy began to trickle down their cheeks. They felt that it was unfortunate for them that they had only a pair of eyes, for the capacity of the pair was quite inadequate to convey the beauty which was presented to them. When they saw that the beauty of the Lord "overflowed" their eyes, they had to shut them for relief; but only for a moment. The maddening desire to see Him led them to open their eyes again. When lo! they perceive all is changed, the Lord having assumed another and quite different form of loveliness, superior, if possible, to that hitherto revealed.

In this manner, after every wink, the bhaktas found to their wonder that the Lord had assumed a new style of loveliness.

Now, the Lord was "Sarbanga-sundara" which, when translated, means, "every-limb-equally-beautiful-Being," or "beautifully proportioned Being." So, when the eyes of the bhaktas were

* When Sree Krishna, in the Geeta, showed his mightiness to Arjuna, the latter was so terrified that he prayed to the Lord to appear to him as man. Those who call it idolatory, because bhaktas give the form of man to God, have never realized what worship by bhakti means.

directed upon one part of the body of the Lord there they were riveted. Suppose, for instance, the eyes of one had accidentally fallen upon the eyes of the Lord. There they remained riveted. Another was enjoying the sight of His lips. Says the first : "How beautiful ! What beautiful eyes !" Says the second : "Yes, but how beautiful are the lips !"

One found himself maddened by the sweet fragrance that was emitted from His person. He exclaims : "Yes, I now see why He gave me my nose. Yes, the nose has its uses ; the nose is the chief source of human happiness." In this manner they served the Lord with their five senses and were served in return, for He has said, "I serve as I am served."*

* A devotee who has any particle of love for God is not satisfied with merely worshipping Him. He longs to worship Him through the five senses—to smell him, to touch him, to see him, etc. The bhaktas had their spiritual senses opened and these enabled them to appreciate the loveliness of God. The gross senses are but the natural expressions of the senses within, as the body is of the soul. A man who is born again has his spiritual senses opened, of course, each according to his capacity and progress. Here we can only lay down certain propositions without going into explanations. Thus, for instance, communion with God is impossible for one whose spiritual senses have not been opened, for God is spirit. Ecstasy is the proof of this communion ; where there is no ecstasy there is no communion. There are various ways of vivifying, developing, and opening the spiritual senses. The Tantriks open this spiritual sense by certain artificial processes, but the Vaishnavas do it merely by the culture of bhakti and prem. The Tantriks cultivate the sense to acquire occult power, the Vaishnavas to be able to secure ecstasy from communion with God. Thus the Arabs cultivate the date trees for fruits, but the Indian do for its saccharine juice from which the finest of sugar is manufactured, and which can sweeten everything. We can go on laying down other propositions, though explanations we can not promise just now or even in this volume which contains only the beginning of the Leela of the Lord. Thus every man has "His Radha within his body who is sleeping." Radha is awakened when these spiritual senses are awakened, and then alone a communion with Sree Krishna is possible. And thus the following saying : Lucky is the man to whom Radha is merciful.

They all felt attracted towards the lovely person before them. They ventured not to approach Him but they felt themselves involuntarily drawn towards Him.

They felt that he was drawing them towards Him "as an angler draws a fish." They approached Him and some touched His fingers, some His hands, some His feet. "How delicious the touch," they exclaim, overpowered with pleasure.

The Lord held them, one by one, in His arms and embraced them !

Holding them in His bosom, He kissed them fervently !

It was then that the true significance of the Vedantic doctrine dawned upon their minds. The Vaidic affirmation is, "He and I are the same." They felt then that He and they were one and that they were portions of Him who is the whole. They had known, a few moments before, what love meant, but now they felt that love rather separated them from, than united them to, Him. They felt that they were at first one, and that love had separated them.

A poor girl may come as a wife to her wealthy husband's house and feel that he is hers and not only he but every thing his. In the same manner the bhaktas felt that not only was He theirs, but everything that was His, the world, the universe. Then, and not till then, those expressions were vividly realized by them which the Sreemat Bhagabat uses to explain the cordial feeling that existed between Sree Krishna and Radha and the Gopees, and which it is impossible for ordinary men to comprehend. Said Radha to Krishna, as described in Sreemat Bhagabat, "I am thine, and thou art mine." "Thou art the life of my life." "Thou art the ultimate goal of my existence." "I am thine and thou art mine, in happiness and misery, sickness and health, now and for ever and ever."

And Sree Krishna in reply to Radha said: "Thy love has attracted me to earth which I prefer to my happiness in Goloka."

"Thou art the joy of my heart." "Thou hast taught me how to love." "Without Thee existence is dreary," and so forth.

Now, the above expressions to and by God Almighty were considered more poetical than real. How could any man, nay, even the Gopees, the most favoured of God, address Him in terms like the above? So the above endearing terms addressed to the Deity, by Radha and the Gopees, were considered to be exaggerations. The bhaktas now found that they were not exaggerations, but fell far short of the reality.

In the Lord the bhaktas at last found the mate of their soul !

The writer is certainly not fitted to describe how they felt when they found themselves in the close embrace of the Lord Almighty. The saints who have attempted to do so have failed, and, as a matter of fact, the hours passed, in the company of the All-sweet God, away with the rapidity of lightning.

But a strange thing happened. Advaita had learnt from practical experience that the mightiness of God was beyond the conception of man, and therefore painful to him. Now, the bhaktas felt that the sweetness displayed by Him was also too much for them. It must be borne in mind that they were only men, that their capacities were limited, that man is a progressive being, that perfection cannot be reached all at once, that what is nectar to him in his state of progress, may be poison to him in his state of undevelopment, and that although God is only good, man can enjoy only that portion of His goodness which is within his capacity. They found themselves exhausted ; they found that even the sweetness of the Lord was killing them inch by inch !

Whispered Advaita to Sreebas. "Is it not time that He should go now? I can't bear His presence any longer." "Neither can I," replied Sreebas. Then, having held a secret conference, they agreed to address Him direct. They assumed an humble

attitude, and prayed thus : "We are puny creatures ; we cannot any longer bear even Thy sweetness. Appear to us as one of us and relieve us of the pressure of 'Thine awful presence.'" People say that it is blasphemy to speak familiarly of God and that it is sacrilegious to give Him the form of man. But alas ! it is impossible for men to have too much of God at one time. They say God is light and they want also to see Him and associate with Him. But if God is light He must possess a fiercer light than that which He created. Can you associate with the sun ? If not, how is it possible that you should associate with God as light ? Christians understand the Bible better, of course, than the writer can pretend to do. But yet he believes that only one sentence in the Bible reveals to man all that need be known by him on this subject, which is "God created man after his own image." That sentence explains clearly how God should be worshipped. It shows that man is man and God can only be worshipped as man in a state of perfection.

Twenty-one hours had passed away since the time of His revelation in the morning. He revealed Himself at about eight in the morning, it was then about five o'clock on the following day.

When the bhaktas prayed that He would subdue His glory and appear to them simply as a man, He said, "Very well, I go." This was followed by something like a shriek and Nimai fell down in a swoon. And thus ended what is called the Maha Prokas or the Great Revelation. Whenever the Lord fell down in a trance his companions became frightened, accustomed though they were to the spectacle. For, in a state of trance, the Lord looked just like a dead man. Sometimes these trances left him quickly, sometimes they did not. On such occasions what his attendants did was to examine, by holding cotton before his nostrils, whether he was breathing or not. If it seemed to them that he was still breathing, they felt themselves relieved, and tried every gentle means to revive Him. Sometimes, however,

they found no trace of breathing, and then their consternation was terrible. They loved the Lord with all their hearts; so, naturally they were constantly afraid of losing him. They knew that the Lord was omnipotent and that He had His own methods and plans. Whenever, therefore, the Lord fell down in a trance, they all apprehended that He would perhaps take that opportunity of leaving them for Goloke.

Every revelation ended with a trance. First the Lord announces that He is going. This is followed by a slight shriek, and then the body falls down as if shot dead. The light disappears from the body, and with it every sign of life. So, when on this occasion the Lord fell down in a swoon, the bhaktas found in it nothing unusual. They waited for some time, and when they found that the Lord remained absolutely motionless, they examined the state of his breath.

They were horrified to find that he was not breathing at all, nor was there any movement of the heart. The condition of the Lord is thus described by the chroniclers. The eyes were fixed, lifeless, lustreless, showing only the lower portion of the pupil. There was no motion of any kind: even the heart had ceased to beat. Cotton held before the nostrils did not move in the slightest degree. His limbs were, however, not stiff, but remained in whatever position they were placed. The only circumstance that indicated life was that there was warmth in the body, which had the lustre of the living, and not the paleness of the dead.

All known methods were adopted to revive him, but without avail.

The suspicion began gradually to overtake them that the Lord had left them. For, thought they, what did that embrace mean, what did that kiss mean? Surely all this meant that He was taking His leave! "Yes, He is the Lord," they muttered to themselves, "but we shall see whether He can

cheat us out of His presence. He has left us by a trick, we shall follow Him." The whole of the previous day and night, most of them had tasted nothing, neither had they slept, or done any thing to give rest to their limbs and minds. They had passed twenty-one hours in a state of constant excitement,—an excitement which was greater than that of a general in the field of battle, or a prisoner before a judge, or a lover in a state of suspense waiting for the final decision of his beloved. They had voted rest, absolute and prolonged rest, for themselves, when the Lord at their request left them, so that they might enjoy it. But how could they go home, or even leave the place, when the Lord Himself was lying before them in that condition ?

They surrounded the person of the Lord, sitting like statues, and talking in a whisper. They had, however, very little opportunity of talking, for their minds were busily engaged with the circumstances of the moment. They had found the Lord,—the Lord who was theirs for ever and ever, and He had left them. Why should they remain on this earth, and endure His absence ? Why should not they follow Him ? Every one was determined in his mind that he would follow the Lord. Of course, suicide is a sin, and a deadly one, but they were not then in a condition to weigh such matters.* They were

* It is but right that we should explain here that there is some slight difference of opinion between Vaishnavism and Christianity, as explained by Christian writers, in regard to the nature of sin. Sin is described by Christian writers in such horrid colours as almost to drive weak-minded men mad at its contemplation. The Vaishnavas, who never admit the existence of a wrathful and vindictive God, naturally do not attach so much importance to sin as some Christian writers have been led to do. Man is not God and can never be like Him, which means that man, though always progressing, must also for ever remain imperfect. That being the case, sin is a necessary condition of his existence. A sinless man is, therefore, as much an impossibility as a perfect man. According to the Vaishnavas sin is only sickness of the

waiting only to see whether the Lord had really left them, or was only in a state of death-like trance. They had before seen the trances of the Lord, they had also on previous occasions given Him up for lost, and their apprehensions had proved false. They had, therefore, a lurking hope in their minds that the Lord would perhaps again graciously remove their apprehensions by coming back to life.

Hope, however, refused to come forward to cheer them. The trance commenced at about five in the morning. There lay before them the golden figure of the Lord without any sign of life whatever. Thus an hour passed, and still there was no change in the body. Thus two hours passed, and still there was no sign of life. The sun rose in all his glory; this they could perceive from within the room. Three hours passed and still the Lord showed no sign of life, and in this manner they waited patiently till midday. For seven hours the Lord had remained in this state, apparently lifeless, before them. Midday passed, yet no sign of life appeared. The bhaktas had no feeling of thirst or hunger, for were they not going to follow the Lord? They were waiting because there was yet one ray of hope in their minds. The body, apparently dead, was for nine hours before them, but yet it did not shew any sign of paleness. It looked as fresh as a living body.

Said a bhakta, "Let us sing the songs of Kunjabhanga;* let this be our last song on earth." The idea was taken up with

soul. Men do not hold their fellows responsible when they fall ill; on the other hand, they tend them with care. Why then should God throw into eternal fire an unfortunate creature of His, who has somehow or other, certainly not willingly always, brought disease upon his soul? For, be it known, that if bodily ailments are brought on unconsciously, so likewise are the ailments of the soul. Thus, for instance, a son inherits the moral imperfections of his father. Is it just to punish him for this, when he is not responsible for it?

* Radha meets Krishna in the sacred bower at night, and leaves Him for home in the morning. This is her usual custom. But Radha is asleep

rapture, for the hearts of all were full and they wanted an outlet for their accumulated feelings. So, with the apparently dead body of the Lord in their midst, they began slowly their mournful dirge. It so happened that the effort gave them some animation, nay, some happiness. The music seemed to be celestial and it soothed their hearts. It appeared to them that they were receiving a flow of ecstasy from the person of the Lord.

Suddenly one discovered pulaks in the body of the Lord. This showed not only that the Lord was there in the body, but also that he was enjoying their song. Now, these pulaks, imperceptible in the bodies of ordinary persons, assumed the shape of a large pea on the body of the Lord. They all carefully examined the person of the Lord to detect whether they were pulaks or not. It soon became clear that there was no doubt about them and therefore the Lord was in the body. "He is here," exclaimed one, whereupon they all expressed their delight by shouts of "Haribole" and "jay." Peal after peal of Haribole followed, while the ladies, who were watching the spectacle with equal anxiety from their apartments, gave expression to their feelings with the joyful "ulu." The elderly ladies then came forward, and some advised that a message should be sent to Shachee at once (who had, of course, been kept ignorant of the state of affairs); whilst others recommended that the Lord should be bathed without delay.

In the midst of these peals of "Haribol" the Lord opened his eyes. The shouts no doubt helped the bhaktas in rousing him. He opened his eyes and yawned. His look was at first vacant, but gradually acquired animation. His eyes travelled over the faces of his attendants with a view to ascertain who

in the bosom of Krishna, and her attendant maids try to awake her by a song. This is called "Kunjabhanga." They sing thus: "Get up, dear, it is morning. We must go home. It is time for us to return;" and so forth.

they were and why they were there. He found that he was lying prostrate, and so arose ; he found that it was broad day ; and then he endeavoured to recollect where he was and how he came to be there. To make things certain he asked, "Well, what is the matter to-day ?"

Whenever he awoke from a trance, he always asked his friends to tell him what the matter was with him. They, of course, concealed from him every thing that he had done and said as Sree Krishna. He himself, as stated before, retained nothing of what he had said or done in his state of trance, though sometimes he had a faint recollection of his doings and sayings in the state of revelation.

To the enquiries of the Lord as to what the matter was, the bhaktas told him that he had fallen into a deep trance and had remained so since the morning previous. The Lord was shocked to hear it, and blushed. He hung down his head and said slowly : "So much time has been lost to me and to you, for every moment of ours is consecrated to the service of Sree Krishna. I am sorry that you had to sacrifice so much of your valuable time for me." Nitai replied : "These apologies should be postponed to a more suitable time. We are hungry and thirsty, and the best thing for us to do now is to go to the river at once and have a plunge." So they all proceeded direct to the river, with the Lord in their midst, now once more a man like themselves, to bathe.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DAY KIRTAN.

“WHY do our days pass in vain, brethren?” asks Nimai earnestly. So that if there were kirtans at night, it was settled that kirtans should be held by day also, sometimes at the house of the Lord himself, and sometimes at the houses of others. It was thus that the Lord held kirtans day and night. No outsider was permitted to see what the kirtan was ; and I fear that my readers, to whom the subject is new, have not been able as yet clearly to understand its nature. Well, besides kirtans, the bhaktas had their conversations about Sree Krishna ; and sometimes the Lord himself, in the character of God Almighty, gave them instructions, though very rarely. In short, day and night, the Lord and his bhaktas did nothing else besides the worship of Krishna.

The news spread far and wide, that Lord Sree Krishna had come down to earth as the son of Shachee. Some believed in the news, some did not. As a general rule, the highest classes, that is to say, the Brahmins refused to accept him, while the lower classes did so with avidity. The Brahmins were interested in discrediting him. What the Lord indirectly preached was that the highest man was not the Brahmin, but the servant of the Lord, and that a servant of the Lord, if he belonged to the lowest class, was higher in status than a Brahmin who had no reverence for the Lord Almighty.

Now, this teaching was in direct opposition to that of the intellectual and spiritual Brahmins of India, who had

held despotic sway in the country from time immemorial. They, therefore, tried to put down this new religion and its founder. The lower classes, on the other hand, flocked in a body to his standard. The powerful Brahmins did all that lay in their power to stamp out the religion of the Lord, but yet their leaders saw with dismay that the Lord was daily winning over to his side men from their ranks. His followers from the higher classes could be numbered by thousands and from the lower classes by hundreds of times that number, though he had flourished only for a few months.

His bhaktas were day and night engaged in worshipping Krishna. The town assumed quite a novel appearance. There was kirtan every evening in almost every house of the lower classes, and also in those of many of the higher. His bhaktas refused to behave like other people. They moved about like drunken men, men drunk with joy, the joy derived from serving Sree Krishna. They ate little and slept less, and kept themselves aloof from the general throng. The greater part of the external world disappeared from their view. They could think of or see nothing which did not belong to the Lord. In the street, if two of them met they gazed at each other and laughed, in the excess of their joy, and that was all. When they spoke they spoke only of the Lord. "What joy !" said one ; "what a lovely Lord !" said another. Sometimes they would meet in the street and then hold one another's hands and dance there before the public, though such exhibitions were considered quite unworthy of the position of a gentleman. Do men, when drunk, take note of public opinion ? Why then should those, who are drunk with bhakti, fear the jeers and insults of the public ?

Those who came to believe that God Almighty had really come and was visible at any moment, had, of course, no sorrow ; on the other hand, they roamed about as if each of them was an Emperor. Not that they were boisterous, aggres-

sive, vain or proud. Convinced of the fact that the mission of the Lord was to save mankind, and that they had been chosen as instruments to serve His purpose, they felt a sincere brotherly feeling for every man, and a detestation for every thing sinful, mean, or improper. Their attitude and behaviour exerted a powerful influence upon those with whom they came in contact. The most sceptical, seeing the change that had been wrought upon men, some of whom were previously notorious sinners, and upon the bhaktas generally, began to yearn after similar good fortune. They wanted to be like the bhaktas, and they began to flock round them to be led to the Lord. Indeed, the bhaktas became so good and so attractive in every way, that most men wished to be like them. Non-believers were thus induced to come to the Lord. To see him was, as a rule, to believe in him. That perfectly chiselled face, which seemed to be the incarnation of intelligence, innocence, simplicity, piety, and love, carried with it a power which those who saw him could scarcely resist.

Then many supernatural incidents began to occur frequently, and in many different places. Chapal Gopal, a savant, who got the nick-name of Chapal because he talked much, insulted meek and inoffensive Sreebas. In three days after the incident, he was overcome by leprosy. This incident created great sensation in the town. Gopal was yet defiant ; but five years after he fell at the feet of the Lord. The Lord said that it was Sreebas alone who could save him. He then sought the forgiveness of Sreebas and was cured, and then with all his following became followers of Sree Gauranga. A Mussalman tailor had one day an opportunity of having a look at the Lord at Sreebas's house whither he had gone for business. The sight maddened him, and for seven days he roamed in the city a perfect lunatic, only with the exclamation of—"I have seen Him," which he repeated continuously in his mouth. He recovered his

natural state gradually, and in time became a great saint and a follower of the Lord. In like manner, Madhava Acharjya, a cousin of Vishnupriya, the Consort of the Lord, and an unbeliever, having one day obtained a sight of the Lord at Sreebas's, was converted. Subsequently he became a saint of great repute. His work, Krishna Mangal, is yet a source of supreme happiness to millions of pious persons.

But men began to be possessed by the divine influence in other ways. The Lord could, of course, impart it at his free-will. He had only to say "Be blessed with bhakti," and that was enough to throw a man down into a trance, from which he rose a new man filled with bhakti and sometimes prem too. This power his bhaktas also began to acquire, one by one, and they also helped to extend the kingdom of the Lord. Others again were converted in still more mysterious ways. There passes a man through the public streets and he falls down in a trance. A crowd surrounds him and he rises with the exclamation of "Hari, Hari." He becomes a bhakta from that moment. A child of five in the arms of his mother suddenly shows indications of the influence, dances like one possessed, and exclaims "Hari, Hari."

People, thus influenced, sometimes exhibited wonders. They became possessed of wonderful gifts, some speaking tongues with which they had had no previous acquaintance. Supernatural incidents began to occur, not only in many parts of the town but also in the country.

Thus the kingdom of the Lord extended, but along with it a spirit of resistance was slowly gaining strength in that city of giant intellects. This opposition increased with the increase of the influence of the Lord. There are people who do not like light or innovation. Then the leaders of society, the Brahmins, apprehended the complete loss of their prestige, power, and influence. Besides the Lord himself became aggressive, that is to say, in his own way, in his attempts at conversion.

There were some traits in the character of the Lord to which I have not as yet referred. It is time that I should do so now. The heart of Nimai was kind, so that any sign of distress in others violently affected him. We have already seen that when Raghunath wept because Nimai's work on Naya was better than his, he (Nimai) flung his own work into the river. He loved sacrifice, and loved those who had a sacrificing heart. He lived for others ; he loved service and not authority. His advice to those who wanted to be a servant of the Lord, which is the path now sought to be followed by every Vaishnava, was embodied in a couplet of his which can be translated thus :

"That man is deserving of praising the Lord Hari, who is meaner in spirit than the grass, who is as patient as a tree, and who honours those who dishonour him."

He never took for himself the credit of any work, but always sought to transfer it to others ; indeed, his nature was such that he thought every man to be higher and better than himself.

But the above amiable traits, though very praiseworthy, are yet human. Nimai was, however, something more than man. Radha, as the Consort of Sree Krishna, is represented as standing on the left of Her Lord with one eye fixed at Him, and the other towards Her attendant maids who, of course, represent human creatures. She is the medium through whom human creatures attain to Sree Krishna. Radha's one eye, therefore, is constantly engaged in taking care of Her beloved maids. Therefore, if Radha's love for Sree Krishna is boundless, her love for human beings is boundless too.

Nimai sometimes represented Sree Krishna and sometimes Radha. When he sits on the sacred dais, he is Sree Krishna ; when he weeps for Sree Krishna he is Radha. So Lord Nimai had not only Radha's love for Sree Krishna, but also Radha's love for human creatures. Here is an ancient and well-known song, in which the Lord is represented as addressing Nitai, his chief follower :

"Come, Nitai, hold me fast, I am overtaken by indescribable misery. (2) I had a mind to distribute Hari-nam to mankind, but the powerful name created a current in my heart. That current carries me away, and has rendered me helpless. (3) Nitai, where is there another friend, excepting thyself, to whom I can disclose the misery of my heart? And who will sympathise with me? Nitai, the thought of the miseries of men rends my heart. (4) I owe debts to men, and I cannot redeem them. I have been made a captive on account of these debts. Where is the friend to procure my release?"

Here we have to offer some explanation of the philosophy embodied in the above song. The problem, how the miseries of man can be removed, has been exercising the minds of men in India from time immemorial. Buddhists, Vedantists, Nayaists have all tried to solve it. One great idea that pervades the philosophers referred to above is, that the best way of removing misery is to bar its passage. They all advise relinquishment. Property is the cause of misery, let none acquire it. Love is the source of misery, let none love. Extinguish the senses, and misery will find no passage by which to come to you.

Now, as has been stated before, emasculation is not encouraged by Vaishnava philosophy. Their pet divinity is not Siva who destroyed Cupid, but Sree Krishna who brought that god under control, and who for that reason is called Madan-Mohan, that is "the subjugator of Cupid." The god Cupid discharged his arrows at Siva who looked at the god in anger and reduced him to ashes. Says Probodananda Saraswatee, the great follower of Sree Gauranga: "Let the senses be kept intact. Of course, they carry poison, but extract the fangs as the snake-charmers do in respect of poisonous serpents, and make them dance to your tune. Don't kill the serpents, for they have their uses in the economy of nature." What the Vaishnavas

advise, therefore, is to keep the senses intact, but also to keep them under proper control.

But how is that to be done? How can a human being escape misery? It can be done by the cultivation of bhakti. Bhakti will remove the misery of man, say the followers of Gauranga. And that in this wise: Bhakti will teach man reliance and forbearance; it will inspire him with faith and hope, and it will enable him to find the mercy of God even in what is called, by ordinary people, afflictions. And does a child who is assured of the love of his parents complain of their chastisement? What can the transient miseries of this world do to one who is assured of the existence of an everlasting happy life, under the care of an ever-loving and all-powerful Father?

So Gauranga clasped the neck of Nitai and bewailed: "My heart breaks at the thought of the miseries of man. Alas, how are they to be saved? Who is to give them the name of Hari? Who is to teach bhakti and remove their misery?"

This is the way Vasu Ghosh describes his feelings when the Lord left Nadia and society: "My heart weeps for Gauranga. Where shall I go; what shall I do to meet Him? Who will now extend His mercy to the sinner, to the worldly and to the fallen? Who will now burst into tears at the sight of a sinner?"

When he heard of the misdeeds of a sinner, he wept and betrayed such an anguish of soul that his companions thought that his heart would break. He would shew more concern for the evil deeds of a wicked man, than a doting father would do for those of his son, or a doting wife for those of her husband. If found face to face with a man, who was spending his days in evil thoughts and deeds, and obliged to speak to him, he would address him with sympathy and affection. During his wanderings in the south, the Lord went direct to the stronghold of a robber chief noted for his cruel disposition and depredations. "Why do I see a saint here in the midst of robbers?" asked the

robber chief of the Lord. The Lord replied, "I come to see you, who are a saint." "I, a saint ? I am a robber," replied the chief. The Lord said, "That may be, but I see a gem (a lump cannot be cultivated) of bhakti in your heart, and that is what makes a saint when cultivated." This was said with such evident sincerity that the robber for the first time perceived that he had his good points. The thought had a powerful effect upon his mind and he immediately burst into tears, threw away his sword, and followed the Lord ever afterwards, till he died in Baroda.

But sometimes his feelings would get the better of him, and he would, at the sight of a fallen man, burst into tears. Under such circumstances, the sinner would fall at his feet and exclaim, "Pray, soothe yourself, my Lord. I can bear to suffer hell, but I can't bear to see the anguish of your heart for my unworthy self. Henceforth I shall try to deserve the dust of your lotus feet." That man was reclaimed then and there. Men of a higher caste will not touch a man belonging to a lower caste. Even a Sadhu will rarely touch a man whom he conceived to be impure, he will rather avoid the contamination. But Sree Gauranga, in the impulse of his love for mankind, would clasp a loathsome creature, even a leper, to his breast, and give him a warm embrace. The touch would reclaim the man with the speed of lightning.

A leper who has been cast off by society, the odious smell of whose body would drive his fellows to a distance, the Lord would clasp in his arms with ardent love, and the lucky man would be healed and saved in an instant.

To summarise : If the Lord as Radha had Radha's love for Sree Krishna, he had also Radha's love for human beings. He felt that he was, as Radha, responsible for the good behaviour of human beings, to Lord Krishna. He felt that he had a debt to discharge, a debt which he owed to humanity. It was thus that he addressed Nitai to procure his

release for the debt by saving mankind. A sinner, therefore, was not an object of anger to him but of compassion, sympathy, and love. He exonerated the sinner from all blame, which he took upon himself.

Lord Gauranga, who was rarely visible and always absorbed in prem, never preached, nor did his bhaktas do so. Men were saved by other means.

Preaching is not one of the ways adopted by Vaishnavas for the spread of their religion. The Lord imparted bhakti in his own way, by a touch, look, or a few words; and some of his followers also obtained the power, though in a lesser degree. The Vaishnavas secure converts by the beauty of their tenets, of the Leelas of their Lord, and of their own character. Mere companionship with a true Vaishnava is oftentimes enough for the conversion of a hard-hearted sinner. The Vaishnava has his fire, but he does not display it by eloquence and fine thoughts as preachers do.* The fire in the heart of the Vaishnavas melts him; and others who come in contact with him are melted by sympathy.

One day while in the midst of his bhaktas the Lord addressed Nitai and Haridas. "Go ye," said the Lord, "to every man in the town, walk from door to door. Tell them to worship Sree Krishna, who is the life of every man. Don't make a distinction between sinner and saint, intelligent and foolish, ignorant and learned, believer and non-believer, high and low, Brahmin and Chamar. Save them all."

Haridas and Nitai were selected for the purpose of proclaiming Sree Krishna for very good reasons. They were ascetics and strangers, they were incomparably pious, and they had acquired the power of imparting the holy spirit. Nitai and

* Preaching is almost impossible for a Vaishnava who is required to be meaner than grass. To preach is to arrogate superiority.

Haridas accepted the task with due humility. The duty that was imposed upon them was to start early in the morning, to travel from door to door, deliver the message, and then return home at noon.

So they both started early the following morning. Their figures were commanding and attractive, though as ascetics they had only pieces of rags wrapped round their loins. They proceeded, with pride in their port and defiance in their eyes, and every body could see that they were men who did not belong to the common throng. We refer to their pride and defiant spirit, but these were not like those of men of the world. Their pride and defiance proceeded from the knowledge that they were bearing an important message from an important Personage. They felt that they were carrying messages of love and hope from their common Father, to their brethren. The magnitude of the task imposed upon them rendered them humble in spirit.

They stand before a door and exclaim : "Hari—Krishna." This is the way ordinary mendicants seek their means of subsistence. The householder, upon this, believing that mendicants are at the door, hastens to give them alms in the shape of a handful of rice. They then look at the alms-giver with an imploring look, and address him thus with folded hands : "We don't beg rice of you, but to worship beloved Krishna who loves you so well." It takes some time for the alms-giver to realise the situation. When he does so, he is either permanently influenced or influenced for the time being, or not moved at all. Indeed, people belonging to the higher classes, when thus addressed, would sometimes take offence. Learned men would address Nitai and Haridas thus : "You, ignorant and foolish men, may make God of a man, but, mind, we have spent years seeking after knowledge. Better go elsewhere, amongst the foolish and ignorant." Some even would go so far as to call them thieves who had come to reconnoitre.

Whenever there is a message from high, and it is delivered to the people, it is accepted; the people cannot resist it. A pretender may announce himself as such a messenger, but then his message, though it may be accepted by a few for a time, is sure to be ultimately rejected. The simple proclamation to love Krishna or serve Krishna would have never produced any effect upon the public if it had not been backed by some other force. That force is what Ramai carried with him to Advaita; that force is what every Avatar or Messiah has in his keeping for the purpose of carrying out his mission. How was it that a few Buddhists from India could succeed in converting China and Japan? They had no witnesses to prove to the people of those countries that there was even such a personage as Buddha, who was born in India. But they had received the power from their master, and that enabled them to enthrall their fellows. In Nadia the simple message proclaimed by Nitai and Haridas produced wonderful effects: most men accepted it. It was because they were backed by that force which Messiahs carry with them. But yet many did not, nay, a few received the bearers of the message with ridicule, even insult. Now, this Nitai did not like.

“What a command is this from our Lord, to proclaim Sree Krishna to the people?” Said Nitai to Haridas. “He has no mercy upon us, for the Lord does not see that we are not only not accepted everywhere as we should be, but we are subjected to jeers, taunts, and other expressions of ill-will.” The experience was strange to Nityananda and Haridas, as it was to every body else. After Bundha and his disciples, no religious character in India had tried to spread religion in this manner. The Hindus are the most catholic race in the world; their ingrained faith teaches them to leave every one to select his own religion. Every river flows to the ocean, say they, as every prayer in whatever way delivered reaches the throne of God.

Nitai did not mind the jeers, but he was grieved because every one did not accept him as a messenger from God. He knew very well that he was not a humbug and that there was no mistake about the source of his mission. Why did not the Lord make his mission acceptable to every one whom he (Nitai) addressed? Surely the Lord could have done so if he had wished. "Let us go to proclaim Sree Krishna to Jagai and Madhai," said Nitai to Haridas.

"And why to them?" asked Haridas.

Nitai.—They are the most powerful men in this city, and perhaps the greatest sinners in this world. If the Lord could make them accept Sree Krishna that would be a miracle which would lead the outside world to recognise our Lord. He does everything in secret, within closed doors, and the result is people call us fools or knaves, because we know that he is the Lord God Himself and they do not.

These two Brahmin youths, Jagai and Madhai, were nominally City-kotwals of Nadia, but in reality they were absolute masters of the lives and properties of the citizens. Their master was Chand Kazee, the Mussalman Governor, who held his authority from the King of Gaur. But practically Jagai and Madhai were the lords of the city. They used their power most atrociously. After collecting around them a band of ruffians they maltreated the citizens in a manner which no human being would have borne patiently except the savants of Nadia. Engrossed in their intellectual pursuits they allowed Jagai and Madhai to do whatever they liked. They took to drink, and, under its influence, began to commit outrages which spared neither men nor women. They robbed men, murdered those whom they did not like, and committed gross outrages upon women. They pitched their tents in various parts of the city, as suited their purpose best, but their approach led the citizens to fly for protection elsewhere.

Said Haridas : "There is this difficulty : Jagai and Madhai may commit an assault upon us."

Nitai.—"But you are used to it." This was said in reference to the flogging which Haridas had received before. And Haridas was, of course, silenced. The fact was, they were, in their heart of hearts, almost courting an outrage upon themselves. They then both proceeded to the brothers, "the greatest sinners then existing."

Nitai stood before the brothers, Haridas behind him. "May Sree Krishna bless you," said Nitai, addressing them. "Dear brothers, worship Sree Krishna. Serve Him, for He is the best of Lords."

Now, Jagai and Madhai had their religion too, which was based upon one of the Tantras. This Tantra advocated the eating of meat and the drinking of liquor. Those who followed this religion called themselves Veeras or heroes. They held their orgies at midnight and had dealings with "dark spirits." It is believed that this Tantric religion was invented with a view to brutalize the Hindus so as to enable them to meet the Mussalman invaders of the country. It is said that the spiritual Hindus found it impossible to cope with the brutalized Afghans and Moghuls who came from the West. What was required was to create a body of men equally brutal, who should be able to meet them. And this Tantricism was invented for the purpose. Men were induced to join it by the mysteries which surrounded all the ceremonies, and the liberty that it permitted its votaries in the matter of eating, drinking and other illegitimate pleasures. They were further promised gifts from spirits and gods. Those who ranged themselves under this banner, naturally became more brutal, if not stronger, than the other Hindus who lived sparingly and on strictly sober principles. The development of their brutal instincts was, of course, founded upon the ruins of their spiritual nature. Jagai and Madhai were surely, therefore,

not pre-disposed to accept Sree Krishna, the God of love. Besides, they entertained a particular hatred for the Vaishnavas. Indee', Tantrics, generally speaking, had a very low opinion of Vaishnavism which, they thought, was calculated to make men effeminate.

When, therefore, Nitai recommended the brothers to accept Sree Krishna, they lost their temper, called him and Haridas humbugs, ordered them off, and forbade the saints to trouble them. The order to retire was not obeyed with the customary alacrity, which enraged the brothers, who thereupon expelled their visitors from their presence by force. Thus Nitai and Haridas had to endure humiliation and insult.

The love of Nitai for his fellow-beings knew no bounds ; and for those who were fallen he felt a most profound pity. His notion was that Jagai and Madhai, inspite of their worldly prosperity, were the most miserable of men. With Nitai, the after-world and the miseries of sinners there were stern realities. He knew that the brothers would suffer terribly hereafter. The condition of the two brothers, therefore, called for his earnest consideration. But he was further helped in forming the deep resolution of converting the brothers by motives of policy, namely, in order that these two men, so well-known in the country and so dreaded by the people, might bear witness to the reality of the Avatar of Sree Gauranga.

Said Nitai to Haridas, "Dear brother, do oblige me by a service. Speak to the Lord about the brothers. Tell him that they demand his first consideration. I know the Lord has a great regard for you, and that he will listen to your request. If you speak a word on behalf of the brothers, the Lord may be moved to take pity upon them and save them." Nitai, of course, had no doubt as to the power of the Lord to save them. He knew that if the Lord only agreed to save them, they would be saved.

Haridas smiled. He said : "I now see all. You who can purify the universe by your slightest desire, want their salvation, and this means that they are already saved." They both returned home, but said nothing to the Lord just then. They were not men to run to the Lord for assistance without first trying what they themselves could do.

Haridas said to Nitai : "To proclaim Sree Krishna in this manner is what was never done before. We must, however, obey the Lord. But what business had you to approach those drunkards?"

Nitai.—"Because our Lord is playful and unconventional and we must needs be like him. And then, dear Haridas, fancy the condition of these wretches. What will become of them?" As Nitai said this, his eyes were filled with tears.

It, however, so happened that the two brothers just at this time pitched their tents in that quarter of the town where the Lord lived. The result was that the people became alarmed, and combined for their protection. They walked abroad but only in large parties, and gave up going out at all after night-fall.

The Kirtan of the Lord was not stopped, however, and one night the sound of the music attracted the brothers thither ! It was early in the morning when the door was opened and the bhaktas issued from the courtyard of Sreebas to proceed to the Ganges for the purpose of bathing. When lo ! who should be there but Jagai and Madhai ? The music had attracted them, and not finding an entry, they had been obliged to be satisfied with what could be heard of the Kirtan from outside. Heaven only knows why they did not use force for the purpose of forcing an entry. What they really did was to pass the whole night outside the door, alternately dancing to the music within, and consuming liquor.

As the bhaktas issued from the meeting they saw before them the spectres of the two brothers ! Immediately they

surrounded the Lord for the purpose of protecting his person. The brothers were then in a happy mood, however. They accosted the Lord, and wanted to know what his troupe sang, having taken the Kirtan party to be only an opera company organized for the purpose of amusement and profit ! The Lord made no reply ; on the contrary, he was in a great hurry to escape from the presence of the brothers.

Nitai's object was thus frustrated. His idea had been to bring the brothers face to face with the Lord. Accidentally this had been brought about, but the meeting had produced no result. So he again induced Haridas to visit the brothers with him and to proclaim the worship of Sree Krishna to them.

Thus they again proceeded to the brothers and delivered this message : "Love Krishna, worship Krishna, serve Krishna." Said they, addressing the two brothers, "Life is short, and the object of life is the attainment of the lotus-feet of God." The brothers were then sufficiently sober to understand the situation. They saw that the same Vaishnavas had again come to them to advocate doctrines which they hated. They had once excused these meddlesome mendicants ; they would do so no longer. So they said : "Humbugs, have you come again ? To-day we will teach you a lesson." So they rose to strike Nitai and Haridas.

Seeing how their pious advances were received, the two bhaktas retreated, hoping in this manner to avoid being pursued or assaulted. But they were mistaken. The two brothers actually pursued them with uplifted fists. There was then no help but to escape by running away. Nitai was a good runner, but not Haridas. So the former had to drag along the latter. The spectacle was certainly not edifying,—two of the greatest bhaktas of the Lord flying before the two infuriated robbers, and the nimbler one dragging the other along with him ! Of course, there were many men in the streets, some of them opponents of the bhaktas, and to these the incident seemed

an excellent opportunity for taking revenge. They exclaimed, "Well done. The humbugs are well-served," and so forth. As for the two brothers, they being yet partially under the influence of liquor had to give up the pursuit.

Ever since the two brothers had pitched their tents in the quarter of the city where the Lord lived, the bhaktas, who resided near him, were constantly under the apprehension of being molested by them. This they thought rather provoking, since the Lord Almighty was in their midst. Yet they took no steps to inform the Lord of the matter; they felt that Sree Gauranga would somehow or other protect them. But the outrage upon Nitai, who was considered the elder brother of the Lord, and Haridas, one of his foremost bhaktas, ought not, it was thought, to be kept a secret from the Lord. So the leading bhaktas besieged the Lord the same afternoon.

The Lord could see that his friends had something to say. So he inquired what it was. They then gave vent to their feelings, how Jagai and Madhai had accumulated waggon-loads of sin upon their heads, how they had committed murders, robbed people, outraged the weak, etc. This description of the character of the brothers did not, however, create any feeling of indignation in the mind of the Lord. He was, on the contrary, overpowered by profound pity, of which his sorrow-depicted face gave ample evidence. He remarked, "Alas ! alas ! deluded fools, they do not know that they will have to render an account of themselves." Another bhakta sought to move the Lord on personal grounds. He explained how they had pitched their tents in their midst, and that their presence had created a reign of terror, and then appealed to the Lord, if he had any pity for the fallen, to take the case of the brothers first into his consideration.

Here Nitai broke in, interrupting the previous speaker : "As for me, I shall never more move about to proclaim Sree Krishna.

And why should we? People call us thieves, cheats and humbugs. Jagai and Madhai would have murdered us had we not escaped through your mercy. You reveal yourself to us in a closed room; but what are you doing for the outside world? We don't want salvation just now. First save the greatest sinners in the world and then you can take our case into consideration."

The Lord smiled, and said: "Lucky are the two brothers, since you, the servants of Sree Krishna, wish them well. Sree Krishna will certainly fulfil your desire so worthy of yourselves."

When the Lord had said this, the bhaktas immediately raised the joyous shout of "Hari, Hari," for they knew from what fell from his lips that the two brothers were saved.

The Lord continued: "Their sins are great, and it is Hari-nam (the name of the Lord) that alone can remove them. Let us save them by giving them Harinam, and let the world see the power which the name of Lord Krishna possesses. Do one thing. Send for all the bhaktas, and let us go in procession to the two brothers, performing Kirtan, and then breathe the name of the Lord Hari into their ears."

No sooner had the Lord uttered this command than the bhaktas ran to fetch their brother bhaktas who were living near, but had not come. Large numbers obeyed the summons, and then all prepared themselves for the Kirtan. This was the first time that the citizens were to witness a Kirtan. They had heard of it, and some of them had called it only a masquerade of drunkenness. But though many of them had tried to see it, none had succeeded in the attempt; for none, except those who had deserved the blessing, had ever been able to gain admittance to the place where it was held.

I have been talking of Kirtan. I shall now attempt a description. Kirtans are either Hari-kirtans or Krishna-kirtans. In the former all men join who wish to do so. Short sermons,

prayers to the Lord or his many names knit together in verse and then set to music, constitute a Hari-kirtan. The words and music of these Kirtans are creations of the Lord Gauranga and his followers. They evoke pious feelings in the mind; indeed, their wonderful music speaks more eloquently than do their words. Well, they sing those who can, and a few play upon the Khole and the Kartal, the former of which is a kind of drum, an invention of the Lord, and the latter a cymbal played with both hands, to keep time. The music, the sentiment, and the poetry in the songs soon evoke pious feelings in the minds of those who take part in the Kirtan. In this manner the individuals of the party help one another, for when one is thus influenced by bhakti, he imparts the feeling to others. Gradually the members are filled with joy, and they cannot resist the impulse to express it by dancing. When one begins to dance, he leads others to do likewise. To make this dance in every way agreeable the performers wear musical anklets. Well, this is the Hari-kirtan with which the Lord went to subdue the brothers. We may describe the Krishna-kirtan hereafter.

To describe the Kirtan in this manner is, however, to do scant justice to it, for words can never convey the wonderful effect it produces upon the human mind. Strong-minded saints go into the wilderness and live in caves, with a view to learn how to concentrate the mind and direct it to God. A Kirtan enables a man to do the same thing, inspite of himself, and that without undergoing mortification, nay, by merely singing and dancing. People feel it an impossible task to subdue their passions, they weep and beat their breasts to deliver themselves from the sins that they have committed, but a Kirtan enables them to do both the one and the other. And thus says Vasudeva, a chronicler of the Lord's doings: "My Lord Gauranga purifies men by making them sing and dance."

Fancy people paying their addresses to the Lord not by prayers but songs, not by kneeling but dancing ! Picture to yourself the spectacle of His creatures delirious with joy because of His goodness and showing it by dancing ! Yes, it is good to join a kirtan party, it is also good to witness it. For who can look at the faces of the bhaktas beaming with bhakti, their bodies gracefully waving to and fro under its influence, their tearful eyes red with love, and not be affected by the sight ?

When the Lord proposed that they should go to the tent of Jagai and Madhai, doing kirtan all the way, and then give Harinam to the brothers, he thereby very severely tested the fidelity of his bhaktas. For to appear in the streets of the sedate city of Nadia with up-lifted arms, dancing and chanting the name of Hari, was to court ridicule, jeers and the pelting of stones. The bhaktas braved it without a condition. But they braved more. They risked immediate slaughter by visiting Jagai and Madhai in their haunts. It must be borne in mind that in those days of anarchy, after the Mussalmans had come and disturbed the established government, leaders with a strong band of mercenaries could do whatever they liked. If the brothers had actually carried out the threats of exterminating the Vaishnavas they might have done it with impunity ; there was none to prevent them, for although there was a Kazeer, or Governor, he had only nominal control over the town. But the faith of the bhaktas in the Lord was firm, and they felt that under his protection they had nothing whatever to fear. From this we may gather the absolute hold that the Lord had obtained over the bhaktas.

The Bhaktas opened the door, and appeared in the streets. Crowds collected to witness, as it seemed to them, the ludicrous spectacle of respectable men, including many savants, dancing with musical anklets on their legs ! Those who had come to

laugh were, however, at once sobered by the spectacle. For the bhaktas who were singing and dancing were in terrible earnest. They were not dancing to praise God, but the praise of the good Lord brought so much pleasure to their hearts that they could not help dancing. Their faces beamed with celestial happiness, which every one could see. There was piety in all that they did, in their voice broken by emotion, in their soft and tearful eyes, in their happy faces and suppliant postures; and men are rare who can laugh at true piety.

As for the Lord he was in the middle, surrounded by hundreds of bhaktas. He looked like a figure of gold, an incarnation of beauty and ecstasy. A description of the dancing of the Lord on that occasion has been attempted by the Chaitanya Mangal. My command of language is not sufficient to enable me to follow him. The Lord danced, and, says the Chaitanya Mangal, "it seemed to the on-lookers as if the joy which impelled him to do so, was without measure and without end." Every one of his limbs shewed the joy that was at work within his heart.

Nitai was at the head of the party. He was taking no part in the Kirtan. He was conducting the expedition to the enemies' camp, and was therefore leading the way. He had set his heart upon the salvation of the two brothers, but he himself had failed to accomplish his desire. Now that he had been able to persuade the Lord to take up the task himself he was in ecstasy. His mind was so occupied with the thought of the brothers, that he had no opportunity of directing it to the lotus feet of Krishna, which the members of a Kirtan party are required to do. The Kirtan, of course, with its songs, the playing of the Khole and the Kartal, and the loud shouts of Hari, Hari, was making a good deal of noise. When the party, therefore, neared the tent of the brothers, their slumber was disturbed.

They had spent the night, as usual with them, in drunken orgies, and they were recruiting their jaded energies by a few

hours' slumber in the afternoon. Being disturbed from their sleep they directed their attendants to stop the noise, whereupon they again fell asleep. The attendants ran out to stop the Kirtan ; they delivered the message and ordered the bhaktas to cease. But the latter were not in a state of mind to listen to such a command, for a celestial joy filled their hearts and the Lord himself was with them. So the message only served to increase their zeal. The attendants returned discomfited and filled with resentment, and told their masters how they had been insulted. "It is Nimai Pandit," said they, "and a large body of men under his leadership, all singing Vaishnava songs, playing on musical instruments and dancing like mad men, who are making all the noise, and when we delivered your message and asked them to desist so as not disturb your rest, instead of obeying they redoubled their noise."

"They are Vaishnavas, are they not?" enquired Madhava, the stronger of the two brothers. "Well, to-day we shall exterminate the pest." Thus saying the two brothers rose in a state of fury. They had never entertained any love for the Vaishnavas ; they had moreover been insulted by the two whom they addressed as humbugs, Nitai and Haridas, who were sent to convert them ; and the pleasant Kirtan was an additional cause of anger. Their slumber had been disturbed, and they could not forgive this. Besides, their authority had been set at naught, and this last circumstance did not certainly serve to mollify their temper. What could be a greater offence to tyrants than disobedience to their authority ? The spirit of murder was in them, and they ran towards the Kirtan party to satisfy their thirst for blood. They had been sleeping in a state of semi-nudity and they were in such a hurry to revenge themselves on the disturbers, that they had no time to put on their dress before proceeding to the attack. What they did was, they wrapped their dhooties round their loins as they advanced, so as not to

lose time. The idea of exterminating the Vaishnavas so delighted them that they did not wish their attendants to share in their pleasure, so that although their attendants followed them, all of them cut-throats like their masters, the brothers took no notice of them, being resolved to do all the bloody work themselves. They, however, committed one blunder in their hurry, namely, they forgot to take any weapon with them, though their followers were fully armed.

The man at the head of the Kirtan party, as before stated, was Nitai, and Nitai and the brothers met face to face.

Nitai saw that the brothers were in a state of fury, and that the spirit of murder was in them. He saw that the two brothers before him were just then under the influence of an uncontrollable homicidal passion. They stood before him as fiends in human shape, and Nitai was not prepared for this. He had expected that the two brothers would be moved by the celestial music and fall at the feet of the Lord, which idea had put him in the happiest possible mood. The spectacle of the two brothers therefore shocked him. He was filled with profound pity, especially because the two fellow-beings before him, God's creatures, blinded by animal instinct and what is called worldly prosperity, were quite unconscious of their own indescribably miserable state, and the awful sufferings that awaited them in the after-life. Nitai tenderly gazed at them, while sentiments of pity for the assailants passed rapidly through his mind, and he sought to address them.

The brothers saw Nitai before them, and the sight inflamed, still more if possible, their passions. They saw before them the same ascetic who had twice insulted them by assuming a tone of moral superiority, and censuring them for their conduct. They took a moment to think what sort of punishment they should inflict upon him, whom they considered an impertinent humbug.

That was Nitai's opportunity. He burst into tears and in broken accents addressed them thus : "We come to you as loving friends. We come not to hurt you and to be hurt in return. We have to tell you that Sree Krishna is a loving master, and that our first duty is to worship His lotus feet. Good brothers, do not be offended. Why should you hurt one," here Nitai felt that Madhai was contemplating mischief, "who is only a poor ascetic?"

Now, from the point of view of the brothers they were the injured party. If they drank liquor or committed murder that was nothing to Nitai or to the Vaishnavas. What right had the Vaishnavas to pose as superior beings and offer them moral assistance which they had not asked for ? And had not they on more occasions than one shewn, in an unmistakable manner, that they did not want the good services of the Vaishnavas ? And what did this show of force mean, hundreds of men coming to their house with loud shouts of Haribole, unless to proclaim that they were rascals ? Would any body tolerate being besieged in his own house for such a purpose ? Besides, as we have said before, they had a determined hatred against the Vaishnavas and their religion. The address of Nitai acted like a spark applied to a heap of dry gun-powder. Madhai, the stronger, did not allow Nitai to finish his sermon. He muttered some imprecations, and finding the broken neck of an earthen jar lying on the ground near him, took it up and flung it with great violence and unerring precision at Nitai.

Flung from the powerful arm of Madhai and with unerring aim, it struck the forehead of Nitai with great force. The blow partially stunned Nitai, and blood spurted from the wound. Nitai, however, immediately recovered his senses, and seeing that the flow of blood was blinding him, he pressed the wound with both hands to stop it.

Madhai saw the blood, but was not appeased. There was another piece of the same jar there, and he picked it up for

another assault, but this time his arm was arrested, and he was prevented from throwing the missile by Jagai. Jagai was less strong and more susceptible than Madhai. The earnest countenance, the tearful eyes, and the passionate appeal of Nitai had, in spite of himself, touched Jagai, and when Madhai attempted another assault, Jagai caught hold of his arm with the remark, "I do not see any merit or glory in killing a stranger and ascetic. Neither do I think that your action will bring you any blessing or advantage."

News, in the meantime, was conveyed to the Lord, who was behind with the Kirtan party, that Jagai and Madhai were killing Nitai. The Lord was in the middle of his bhaktas, while Nitai had gone ahead. So the Lord and those who surrounded him had no knowledge of the serious incident that had just occurred ahead of them. The Lord was rudely disturbed in the midst of his lovely dance by the message that they were killing Nitai. "They are killing my Nitai," exclaimed the Lord, and he hastened forward. A passage was opened out for him by the bhaktas, and the Lord approached Nitai. He saw that the face of Nitai was besmeared with blood, that he was pressing the wound in his forehead with both his hands to prevent the blood from flowing, and that he was nevertheless dancing in the joy of his heart, and repeating the name of the Lord (Gaur).

Both Chaitanya Mangal and Chaitanya Bhagabat say that Sreepad Nityananda, when he was hurt, came to realize the fact that Madhai was saved, for it would be impossible for the Lord to ignore such an outrage as had been committed by Madhai. To take note of the outrage would be to save the brothers, for in this avatar the Lord had foresworn punishment, he could only punish by giving salvation. He had also another cause of joy. With lightning rapidity he came to feel that the wound to his forehead meant not only the salvation of the brothers, but good

to all humanity. For if the brothers were converted, would not the whole world be converted by that miracle? And therefore it was that he danced in the height of his joy.

The first thing the Lord did was to take his own *Chaddar* (sheet) and wrap it round the forehead of Nitai with a view to stop the blood. This done, he had time to look at the brothers and their party. As a matter of fact the touch of the Lord stopped the flow of blood and there was thus no further necessity to attend to Nitai.

He saw that Madhai, who was being held fast by his brother, was yet violently foaming at the mouth, and trying to extricate himself to attack the Kirtan party, and that the fiendish followers of the brothers stood behind them, with deadly weapons in their hands awaiting orders. As for Jagai, he had no doubt done a good service in restraining Madhai, but otherwise he remained as great a monster as he was before. He had, however, his wits about him, and seeing that hundreds of the leading men of the town were then assembled around the bhaktas, many of whom were their acquaintances, and some even their relations, he was no longer in favour of the actual "extermination of the Vaishnavas" which the brothers had in their fury resolved upon when they left their beds for the attack, and which would have been the result, if he had allowed his brother to have his own way. Although Madhai was for the extermination of the Vaishnavas and Jagai was not for such a terrible punishment, yet the latter was angry and defiant and not in the least disposed to allow the meddlesome humbugs i. e. the Vaishnavas to go altogether scot-free.

The Lord, after taking care of Nitai, stood surrounded by hundreds of bhaktas, face to face with the brothers, who on their side were supported by hundreds of robbers and murderers. The Lord addressed the brothers. When he commenced, every one was hushed into silence. Said he: "Are you not ashamed

of the cowardly act of committing an assault upon an unarmed man, a stranger and an ascetic sworn never to hold a lethal weapon? How could you bring yourself to hurt him? Had he attacked you? Had he not at least meant to serve you?"

The brothers, irresistible in strength, never accustomed to be thwarted, much less reprov'd, always under the influence of passion, might have been expected at least to interrupt the Lord. They would, one would think, stop or even assault the Lord; but they did not. They allowed him to proceed as passively as if they were prisoners before a Judge. And why! It was because they felt themselves paralysed!

"You are accumulating sin," continued the Lord, "incessantly upon your heads, and you seem not to be growing tired of it. It never occurred to you that a day of reckoning would come eventually, when you would be made, in spite of your brute strength, to give a full account of yourself. That day, nay, that moment is come. You began in sin, and your assault upon Nityananda, the humble slave of the Lord and the disinterested friend of the poor and fallen, is a fitting end. Now, Jagai and Madhai, receive your due punishment."

This threat of punishment was uttered against two men with whom the murder of a woman was a pastime, who, as City-kotwals had absolute sway over the lives and property of the citizens, and who, with their numerous followers and armed men, were really in a position to exterminate the Vaishnavas whom they had threatened. Their will was law in the city, and they were accustomed to be obeyed invariably and never to be thwarted, much less punished. And their passions, by constant misuse of the irresistible power enjoyed by them, had almost extinguished all the finer sentiments which they had inherited from God.

On the other hand, their would-be punisher was a young man of about twenty-three, a literary and unarmed man, follow-

ed by literary and unarmed and peaceful men like himself. The brothers had, therefore, no business to quail before the young pandit. As City-kotwals, they might have sent him to jail ; as captains of robbers they might have slain all those who stood before them. As men of unruly passion and at that moment completely under its control, the most natural thing for them would have been to fall upon their opponents with sword in hand and cut them to pieces.

But they did no such thing. They stood transfixed to the spot ! They found themselves standing with folded hands in token of submission and trembling from head to foot with fear. They found that they had lost, not only all power of moving their limbs, but even of speech, and that the Being who was standing before them was indescribably terrible and was their inexorable Judge !

The Lord after delivering his judgment loudly summoned his Chakra.*

It was then that the terrible Being before the brothers revealed Himself to them as the Great Judge. They and all those who witnessed the fire that surrounded the brothers came to feel that the last moment of the latter had arrived. Most men present felt satisfied, for the brothers were deservedly hated by them.

Nitai, however, did not like this unexpected turn of events. He had gone there for their preservation and not for their destruction. When he was struck he danced with delight. It was because he felt that by that incident he had acquired a claim in regard to the souls of the two brothers. If the Lord

* God Sree Krishna, as the Avenger of wrongs, is armed with the weapon called *Chakra*, by which He destroys the wicked. The submissive attitude which the brothers assumed, was attributed to what they and others witnessed, when the Lord summoned the *Chakra*. The brothers and others, it is stated, saw that a dreadful fire was approaching towards the former. Anyhow the brothers stood transfixed

meant punishment to the brothers, he would plainly tell Him that they had offended him (Nitai), that He had no business to interfere in the matter, and that he claimed the two souls by the severe wound on his forehead. But now the Lord, assuming his own inherent independence, was going to take the matter into his own hands ! This, thought Nitai, he should try to prevent, so he loudly cried : "Mercy," and he fell at the feet of the Lord.

One fact Nitai knew, which was that if he himself had any slight desire for the salvation of the brothers, the Lord had a greater desire to accomplish that end than he. For, was He not All-mercy, that is to say, only mercy ? Of course, He had to assume the appearance of severity to maintain the superiority of righteousness over sin, but Nitai knew full well that, in His heart of hearts, He was more tender than he himself or anybody else in the universe. So he thought, if he but once prayed to the Lord for the souls of the brothers, He would not only grant the request, but also be obliged to him for having preferred it. He was, therefore, exceedingly surprised to find the unforgiving attitude of the Lord ; for though Nitai, whom he called his elder brother, knelt before him and prayed for mercy, he yet remained utterly unmoved.

Nitai was disconcerted. He remembered that Madhai had drawn blood from his forehead, and that the Lord had just cause of offence against the man. He therefore again addressed the Lord in these terms : "My Lord, I see, it is the slight wound on my forehead which makes you unrelenting. But I assure you, it may all be little more than the result of accident. Madhai probably never meant to hurt me, but struck at me blindly under the influence of a sudden impulse. And then the wound is very slight, and, believe me, my Lord, I did not feel it in the least. So have mercy, my good Lord."

But the Lord remained as immovable and terrible as ever. His face, which usually beamed with love and mercy, did not

shew the least sign of being affected by the passionate appeals of Nitai.

Nitai then changed his tactics. He said : "My Lord, assuming that they deserve punishment, please do not forget your promise. Did you not promise that in this avatar, you would not wield any weapon of destruction, and that you would save the wicked by appealing to their better nature, by kindness, by your inexhaustible mercy, and by washing away their sins with your tears of sympathy. You have nothing to do with your Chakra in this avatar. Forget not that you have come to soften the hearts of the wicked, and if you now kill them with your Chakra, whom will you save then?"

The Lord still remained unmoved ! There was not a sound in the vast crowd while Nitai was speaking. "What is the matter with the Lord," thought he, "the Lord whom the misery of others throws into a convulsion of grief ? It is no doubt the wound on my forehead." Nitai again changed his tactics. He said : "My Lord, you know best what to do under the circumstances. But yet you can not kill both, for Jagai saved my life."

Immediately the Lord fastened his looks upon Nitai and asked : "Explain ! What do you mean ? Jagai saved your life !"

Now, as we stated before, when the assault was committed, the Lord was in the midst of his bhaktas, far in the rear. Thus he had witnessed nothing. Nitai now told him, how, when Madhai sought to assault him a second time, Jagai not only held him fast, but also rebuked him for his cowardly conduct.

Immediately an approving smile lighted up the divine face of the Lord. He looked again All-mercy, All-good, "from the sole of his foot to the top of his head." "So Jagai saved your life ?" said he, addressing Nitai ; and then looking up to Jagai, "So Jagai, you saved the life of my Nitai ? Yes, you have conferred an infinite obligation upon me. You deserve a reward from me. Here it is, let me embrace you." Saying

this the Lord, the Incarnation of Purity; held the loathsome moral leper in his bosom and gave him a warm embrace !

And what was the result ? Jagai fell down on his back as if struck by lightning, in a state of complete trance. His fixed and staring eyes, his motionless limbs indicated that life had left him. When Jagai fell down in a trance, the incident was followed by a joyous shout, not only from the bhaktas, but also from others, including their opponents, who had, unperceived by them, caught the contagion of the moment.

Madhai was in a state of utter despair, indeed he had lost all hope, all volition, even all power of speech. The mercy shewn to his brother, however, proved a ray of hope, which entered his heart, and brought back to him his life which had almost deserted him. This hope not only gave him life, but also produced a revolution in his mind. Previously he had felt that he was the greatest offender in the world ; that he was a doomed man, and that it would be folly on his part to allow any ray of hope to enter his heart. But the mercy shewn to Jagai, without any effort on his part, made him feel in spite of himself, that his offences were not as great as he had thought them to be. With these thoughts he fell at the feet of the Lord, exclaiming, "Mercy, merciful Lord ?"

Immediately the Lord retreated a step. He said : "Madhai ! Your case is not so simple as you think."

Madhai was disconcerted, but yet he did not lose all hope. Perhaps he thought the Lord was playing a part. Said he : "My Lord, we are all your children." For he had then not the least doubt that the Being before him was the Lord of the Universe. He continued : "I am also one, and you cannot, therefore, cast me away."

The Lord said : "You, a creature of God ! Did you ever recognize it ? Why, then, did you maltreat those who were your brethren ? Fie ! Madhai, you, the lord of all, you before

whom men trembled with folded hands, to pose before me as a supplicant and a beggar in the presence of this crowd of people ; you, the best dressed man in the town to roll, with your fine clothes on, in the dust, to weep as helplessly as those whom you often made to weep before you,—are you not ashamed of yourself ?

“Blinded by material prosperity,” continued the Lord, “you crushed out all your fine sentiments given you by a kind and merciful God that you might be a help and comfort to your fellow-men, you trampled the weak, the poor, the innocent, the good, under foot, and now you claim your right as the child of the same Father who created all ? Madhai, have you no shame left ?”

Madhai was again seized with utter despair. He muttered something to the effect, that the Lord was impartial, that as his brother, his partner in guilt, had been excused and accepted, he expected the same treatment from the Father of all.

The Lord again replied : “Madhai,” said he, “when the bhaktas came to give you the name of Hari they, of course, thereby condoned your past misdeeds. Sripad Nityananda came to bless you and your brother. Your past misdeeds then would not have been taken into account, and you would have been accepted as Jagai has been. But you have given fresh offence, you have drawn blood, not only from a bhakta who is besides an innocent man, but from one who was your well-wisher. No, Madhai, you can expect no service from me.”

Madhai was silenced, and he thought profoundly for a second. He, however, could not remain quiet, so he again addressed the Lord. He said : “I see it is all over with me ; yet I don’t know why all hope does not yet desert me. Am I then to be abandoned thus, for ever and ever ? My Lord, I don’t ask forgiveness of you, nor am I afraid of punishment. Let it come, and I shall welcome it. Only tell me, is there any way,

any penance, by which I can, at any future period, attain to your lotus feet? Only tell me the way if there be any, and then cast me off."

When Madhai said this the countenance of the Lord assumed its usual loveliness. The severity of his tone disappeared, and he addressed Madhai in the sweetest of voices: "Well, if you come to that," said the Lord, "I think I can help you. You offended Sripad Nityananda. If you can, by any means, secure his forgiveness, I think, for his sake, your case might be taken into favourable consideration. You are absolutely at the disposal of Sripad, the friend of the fallen; no one else, not even I, can help you."

"Mercy, mercy," cried Madhai, and he fell at the feet of Nityananda. Simple Nitai was overjoyed, and was going to shew it, when the Lord caught hold of his hand and said: "Don't permit that unfortunate creature, by too ready forgiveness, to think lightly of his misdeeds. Let me, therefore, implore your forgiveness, Sripad, on behalf of this miserable being. Dear Sripad, forgive him for my sake, and shew to the world the difference between a servant of the Lord and a sinner. Let Madhai know that his offences are so great that even I can not excuse them, and that I have to implore you for his forgiveness."

Nitai, interrupted by the Lord, heard him with due submission. He then, addressing the Lord, said: "You hold the strings and make us do your wishes, as a magician does with his puppets. It is you who felt pity for your fallen child Madhai, and it is you who intend to save him through me. Always kind to your bhaktas you are always ready to give them prominence—one of your amiable tactics is to transfer all your credit to your servants. Your object, kind Lord, is to shew your regard for your servants, and, therefore, you place Madhai at my disposal. Let thy will be done. Let me be the

means of his salvation. You say that, for his salvation, it is necessary that I should forgive him. I do forgive him from the bottom of my heart. Nay, I must tell you what I feel. Let all the dwellers in Heaven and on this earth bear me witness. I not only forgive Madhai unconditionally, but also make over to him any merit that I may have earned by any good act of mine during the whole course of my existence."

The announcement, when its significance was realized, was received with loud and repeated shouts of Haribole. Indeed, this was the first time that the stillness of the scene was broken by a continued demonstration. A large crowd of outsiders had very naturally collected there, but the all-engrossing scene before them had kept them enthralled. So it had become possible for most of them to hear every word that was spoken there, by the Lord, by Madhai, and by Nitai. Nitai continued: "Now, my dear Madhai, come to my bosom, and let the world see that there is no longer any difference between us;" and so saying Nitai caught hold of the arms of the great Citykotwal, drew him towards himself, and gave him a warm embrace.

Madhai, like his brother, fell down in a trance beside him. So they lay side by side, their eyes fixed and froth coming from between their lips.

The pressure of the crowd was very great. Every one wanted to come and see the terrible brothers now rolling in the dust. The Lord whose work had been done, therefore, hastily withdrew his bhaktas, leaving the brothers where they were in a state of trance in the public street.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PASSIVE STATE.

THE Lord came home with his bhaktas and they all sat in the courtyard to take rest after their exertions. The season was the hottest, and the time the afternoon, the exertion and the excitement that they had gone through, had made them perspire. They were yet in a state of bewilderment on account of the experience they had just gone through. The sun had just set, and they were preparing to go for a plunge in the river, when they heard loud calls of "Thakur" at the door.

This word Thakur is an epithet sometimes applied to God, sometimes to holy men, and sometimes to big folks. Of course, they could all perceive that some body was seeking the Lord, and was awaiting orders at the door. Some one hastened to enquire, and on his return he announced to the Lord and the bhaktas that it was Jagai and Madhai !

They had now come to be saved. Now, th's is the natural way, that is, the men to be saved must come to their master or Guru to be blessed. It is an unnatural arrangement for the Guru to save his would-be disciple by going to him, as the Lord had done in the case of Jagai and Madhai. He went there to give *Harinam* to the brothers, but for the purpose of salvation they should come to him. For the purpose of the germination of the seed of bhakti, sown in the heart of the Chela by his Guru, it is necessary that the former should be, in what is called, an exceedingly passive state. His heart must long for

the seed, he must knock and at last compel the seemingly unwilling, but, in reality, cautious Guru, to satisfy his cravings. When, however, the process is reversed, when the Guru seeks to save a Chela against his will, he generally fails. The process adopted by the Lord was what never ought to be followed by ordinary men. To go in force to a man's house, unwilling to be saved, and attempt to save him by force, is to create a spirit of resistance. Jagai and Madhai were perfectly justified in resisting the action of the Lord and his bhaktas. Of course, Madhai was worsted, but then his Guru was more powerful than ordinary men are, and so it was no disgrace to Madhai that he was defeated by Him.

When it was announced that the brothers had come, Murari, with the permission of the Lord, hastened to bring them in. Now, the two brothers had prided themselves on their brute force, and Murari wanted to shew them that even in that they had their masters. For, Murari was a strong man and became irresistible in his ecstatic state, in which condition he was still, as also the other bhaktas. They entered into this condition when they had first left the house of Sreebas and repaired to the brothers, and they were still under its influence. So what Murari did was to bring in the two brothers in his arms !

They came before the Lord, and, with a shriek, crying for mercy, again fell down senseless.

The Lord was still in his Divine state ; indeed, he had ceased to be man the moment he had opened the doors and proceeded towards Madhai. Addressing Nitai, the Lord said : "Sreepad ! Take the two penitents to the Ganges, and there breathe *Har-nam* in their ears. You wanted them from me, indeed you alone have claims upon them, and I make them over to you."

There are many songs describing the salvation of the two brothers. Here is one, in which Nitai addresses the brothers :

Come ye, two brothers, to the bank of the Ganges.
I shall give you two the name of Hari to-day.
Do not, Madhai, mind the beating that you gave me,
But come along dancing to the sacred river.
You struck me with the piece of an earthen jar,
But should I, therefore, refuse to give you *prem*?
You flung a piece of the earthen jar at me,
I shall now have my revenge by giving you *prem*.

So here was another incident which brought the Lord and the bhaktas in contact with the outside world. The door was again opened and the apparently dead bodies of the brothers were carried to the Ganges with the sounds of Khole, Kartal, and Haribole. This time there were no jeers from the public, the procession passed through crowds who followed it with great reverence and wonder. When they had all entered the Ganges, the brothers recovered.

In the river, as was usual with the bhaktas, they became very frolicsome. Now, the Hindus are a sedate race, and the savants are bound to forswear levity in every shape. They have to walk with a steady and slow gait, to speak in sedate and measured tones, and to present a passionless exterior in every condition of life. If they bathe, they must do it only to wash themselves; if they eat, they must do it as a duty. But the Lord had been a restless infant and a restless boy, and continued to be a restless youth, inspite of his attaining to the position of a savant. This frolicsomeness did not forsake him even when the Lord was worshipped by his bhaktas, as the Avatar of the Lord Almighty. When he was under the ecstatic condition, of course, he had to act in unconventional ways. But when he was not, yet then he could not control the action of the ecstasy upon him, which constantly played through his nerves.

The cultivation of bhakti chastens the nerves and fills the heart with joy. This joy is carried by the chastened nerves to

all parts of the body. The result upon the skin is pulak, and upon the eyes and nose a flow of water. When the flow of joy is too great, the bhakta falls down in a swoon. Even, when a bhakta is comparatively free from the immediate influence of bhakti, he is never deprived of small currents of joy that are constantly passing through his frame. This makes him jolly, mirthful and frolicsome. Thus, in the streets, when even absolutely free from the influence, the Lord walked and sometimes ran in a manner, which very much scandalized his brother-professors. In the river the Lord was frolicsome too. He, there, engaged in all sorts of games with his bhaktas. For, as the Lord did, so did his bhaktas. Advaita was an old man of seventy-six, but when he came to take shelter with the Lord, he too became as light-hearted as a child.

The cultivation of bhakti makes a child of a man. A bhakta can never grow old. He feels even in his eightieth year, as a child of five. One of the complaints brought against the religion of Sree Gauranga by learned Brahmins was that it made people behave like, as they thought, mad men. In the river, after having played for some time, pelting each other with handfuls of water, in the midst of frequent and loud shouts of Hari-bole, the bhaktas were hushed into silence by a gesture from the Lord. A large crowd had gathered on the bank, the evening was clear, for the moon had risen, and they stood all expectant to see how the matter would end. Said the Lord in a loud voice to Nitai: "I make over these two penitents to you, Sreepad. Purify them by giving them the name of Hari, and shew to the world that His name is more potent than any accumulation of sin."

They all stood waist-deep in the water, surrounding the Lord, who was in the middle. Nitai on his left and the two brothers, with folded hands, before Him. The Lord, in solemn language, then addressed the brothers: "Jagannath and Madhab,

you have been accumulating sins since your birth. Deliver them to me with copper, tulsee and Ganges water, and thereby relieve yourselves of your burden and become pure !”

It took some time not only for the brothers, but even for the bhaktas of the Lord, to understand what he meant. When they realized the situation, they were all stupefied with awe.

Now, it must be borne in mind that to the people of Nadia, the two brothers were the greatest sinners in the world. To their notion, this meant almost eternal misery. Every deed done in the bosom of the sacred river Ganges is irrevocable. If a man utters a lie while in touch with the water of the Ganges, he is almost eternally damned. Witnesses, therefore, were required in former days to touch that sacred water when giving evidence. In the same manner a promise made while in the bed of the river, is to be religiously observed, and there is no escape whatsoever from it. When the Hindus execute any deed of gift it is registered with Ganges water, tulsee leaves, and copper. When a deed is registered in that way it becomes binding upon both the parties, for ever and ever. Here then the Lord demanded all the “mountain loads” of sin that the brothers were carrying on their heads. There was no joke in it, the transaction was as real as any thing could be. The deed of transfer which the Lord wanted to be sealed in the most sacred manner possible, therefore, gave a shudder, not only to the crowd who were witnessing the ceremony from the bank, but also to the bhaktas

As for the brothers, when they realized the situation, they soon formed their resolutions. They were then fully aware of their wretched condition ; the way out of their wretchedness was thus made clear for them by the Lord ; but they refused to avail themselves of it. They declared : “Let us suffer for our misdeeds. My Lord, don’t please issue mandates which can never be obeyed. Moral lepers as we are, we are not yet

so mean and selfish as to be capable of doing what, my Lord, you command us to do."

This reply of the brothers was received with approbation by all, and expressed by loud shouts of Haribole.

But the Lord remained unmoved. He again demanded of the brothers in a firmer tone to deliver all their sins to Him.

Under the firmest belief that they were addressing the Deity Himself, the brothers felt that their duty was to obey. But they yet could not make up their minds to agree to the proposal. So they again expressed their refusal. They said: "My Lord, please excuse us. People offer you the choicest of flowers. If we now obey you, our fellow-creatures will never forgive us, wretches, for offering you our sins."

The Lord was, however, inexorable. He again made the demand in the same language. Here Nitai intervened. He advised the brothers to submit. He said: "You must not forget that nothing can soil fire, but fire purifies everything. As a man you cannot help apprehending that the load of your sins will prove a burden to the Lord. Only remember who He is that demands your load, and that will relieve you of your apprehension. Every body says that if God is merciful, He is also the Avenger of sin. Let it be proved that the Lord also is Himself the Saviour. It seems the Lord means to prove this through you. Don't hesitate any longer, but do the Lord's bidding, that is the safest and best thing for us, poor creatures, to do."

The brothers having submitted, stood before the Lord oppressed by diverse feelings. Now, the deed of transfer was to be effected according to the Hindu method. The giver must declare while in contact with the sacred water, copper and tulsee that he makes a gift of such a thing to such an one and to the son and grandson of such an one; and the receiver has, in the same solemn manner, to declare, "I accept." No deed of gift is complete unless both the giver and the receiver express their

perfect agreement. So the Lord extended his joined hands for the purpose of receiving the gift, and the brothers uttered the formula, as is written in the sacred laws. They said, and every body heard the words distinctly, that they were making over all the sins they had committed by the sons of Raghunnth and Janardan and grandsons of Rajah Subhananda Roy,* during the period of their existence, to the Lord. And the Lord, in the same distinct manner, under the seal of the sacred things enumerated above, signified his acceptance. He said:

“I ACCEPT YOUR GIFT !”

It is impossible to describe the effect that the above few words had upon all those who were present, bhaktas and outsiders. Those who have no belief in what is called sin, or the possibility of its transference by a compact notified in the most solemn manner, with sacred water, tulsee and copper, will hardly be able to realize the significance of the transaction effected. To all those present the ceremony was no joke, everything was as real as anything could be. The transaction carried out was as real to them as the transfer of a cow or a piece of land. In the opinion of most of those present, sin was the greatest curse which could affect man. They had all come to feel that the greatest sinners in the world were the two brothers. They had no doubt, that the brothers by this deed of transfer had been able to relieve their souls of their mountain loads of sin, and put them on that of the Lord.†

* Jagai and Madhai were not uterine brothers but cousins.

† The popular notion is that any one can relieve himself of his sins if another consents to accept them. When we were lads a ceremony like this was performed. A dying man refused to die though his sufferings were so acute that his nearest relations wished him relieved of his tortures. It was thought his sins kept him chained to the body, and his mother immediately undertook to relieve the dying man of his load.

The outsiders whispered among themselves that such a deed of sacrifice had never been done in the world in any age. Of course, Nitai tried to prove to the brothers that it was no sacrifice on the part of the Lord whom impurity in any shape could never touch, to accept this load of sin, but yet there was no one present who could be thoroughly satisfied by this assurance. They, of course, believed that their Lord was no other than He, the Father of all. But they could not always realise in their minds what that meant. They could only realise it in some degree, when He himself revealed it. At other periods, they could never fully forget that he was a man. I have already stated that it is impossible for one to realise the presence of the Lord God and then associate with him for any length of time.

Every one present looked at the Lord with the profoundest pity, admiration and love.

Here a miracle occurred. No sooner had the Lord said, "I accept," than his golden hue was changed and his complexion became dark. It being night no body, except those who were near, could, however, perceive it. This change of colour in the Lord shewed that the sins of the brothers had entered his body.

Nitai breathed the name of Hari in the ears of the brothers. From that moment they were accepted by the Lord.

They then all returned to the house of the Lord, where a Kirtan was immediately commenced. There Nitai danced with the two brothers, and danced like one who had gone mad in his joy. He sometimes danced on one leg, sometimes his dances were big jumps, and sometimes clean somersaults. Anyhow if the dance was not elegant, it served its purpose.

When the brothers took to dancing, it created the greatest possible wonder, and it is expressed by the following song of the period describing the feelings of those present :

"What a miracle ! lo ! Madhai dances ! Jagai may dance, but lo ! it is also Madhai who dances !"

Now dancing in a Kirtan is not a mechanical affair. To be able to dance, one must have the necessary purity and impetus in him. Dancing, as we said before, is not a genteel pastime in this country. But yet people do dance even in this country, when under the influence of liquor. But those who yield to the influence, need a sufficient quantity of intoxicating drink to be able to conquer their bashfulness. In this manner, in Kirtans one must have imbibed a sufficient quantity of the divine influence to be able to dance. The dance resulting from the influence of prem and bhakti is quite a different thing from a mechanical dance. A Kirtan dance has a powerful effect upon those who witness it. When Madhai danced, the bhaktas thought it a very great miracle. So they declared amongst themselves ? "Yes, Jagai has proved himself to be the possessor of some redeemable qualities, and so we can understand his being able to dance ; but how is it that Madhai should be able to dance under the influence of prem and bhakti, Madhai who only a few hours before was the greatest sinner on earth ?"

As for the brothers, it was, however, not actually prem and bhakti, that led them to dance, but hope. They had lost hope, and finding one ray of it, they could not help expressing it by a dance. For their dance ceased in a short time, and they began to weep.

Madhai refused to go home, and remained at Sreebas'. He had no longer any desire but that of deserving the forgiveness of the Lord. He wept incessantly, and for-swore food and sleep. Nitai, Sreebas and others tried to soothe him ; they told him that he had no longer any sin ; that the Lord had made him pure, nay, had taken all his sins on his own shoulders, but this did not bring him consolation. The

idea that the Lord had taken all his sins on his shoulders gave Madhai a shudder. Indeed, his greatest sorrow was that the Lord had relieved him of the punishment justly due to him. Madhai was slowly starving himself, and Nitai failed to afford him consolation, and so at last he appealed to the Lord. "My Lord," says he, "we can scarcely save Madhai, for he has given up food and hope."

The Lord was moved, even to tears. He hastened to Madhai, whom he saw weeping with a plate of rice before him untouched. The Lord sat before Madhai, and said, "Dear Madhai, don't kill yourself! Eat, please."

Madhai opened his eyes and saw the Lord before him. The spectacle doubtless gratified him, but it also reminded him of his sorrow which he was trying to forget. He saluted the Lord with great humility and tried to receive him cheerfully. The Lord said, "Madhai! I must say this is a little selfish on your part. You have made Nityananda, whose name denotes the constant ecstasy with which he has been blessed, miserable; you have made others miserable too. But what ails you? Are not your sins all forgiven?"

When the Lord spoke of the forgiveness of his sins, Madhai shuddered.

The Lord continued: "I am before thee ready to grant whatever thou wouldst have. Tell me, how further I can help thee."

Madhai said: "My Lord, let me explain the cause of my sorrow. The highest blessing of man I have received. I know further that I am burthened no longer with sin. But yet I cannot restrain my tears, or put a stop to the sorrows which, like the waves of the Ganges, come one after the other in succession, and overwhelm my heart. The cause of my sorrow is Thy kindness. What am I that Thou shouldst think of me? Thou art purity and I am dirt. Forgetting that, Thou hast been treating me as if I were a pet child of Thine. If I

had been punished for my sins, I think I should have been less miserable than I am. I now see that it is a wise arrangement which visits sin with punishment. My Lord, the more Thou art showering Thy mercies upon me, the more miserable I am becoming."

In the presence of the Lord, Madhai was somewhat soothed, and he wiped his tears and took his meal. He had to speak with restraint before the Lord, but he was more free with Nitai, his spiritual Guru, and the only being in the world with whom he thought he had then any relationship, for he had forsworn society, family and friends. To Nitai he opened his heart. He said: "The acceptance of myself and of my sins by the Lord has given life to my heart. Previously it was dead, or under the absolute control of fierce passions. But the Lord's blessing has awakened me, as it were, from a stupor, and my past life now stands to me revealed. And what do I see? There is nothing in it to flatter, to please, or to console me. It is one continued record of crimes and cruelties committed and inflicted for selfish purposes. I cannot remember all the crimes committed by me or all the parties I have injured, more especially because I was almost continually under the influence of liquor. But some of my acts I remember vividly, and others faintly. They are now having their revenge upon me. Every act of mine has now, as it were, taken shape to inflict punishment upon my most vital parts. In my waking state I see before me pictures of outraged women, of orphaned children and men in agony, all reduced to that condition by me. In my dreams things long forgotten come to my mind to torment me." "My revered Guru," continued he addressing Nitai, "it seems to me that when the Lord accepted me, He by that simply meant, that He would give me the power of weeping. Yes, that is His greatest blessing. This weeping relieves me somewhat; indeed, but for this weeping I should have been

burnt to ashes by the fire awakened in my heart by the Lord's blessings upon me."

A miracle ordinarily means the suspension of the laws of nature. But God never suspends the laws of nature, for He is not like a fitful King who does one thing to-day and, when he thinks he has committed a mistake, undoes his own act the next day. In the case of Madhai, God did not suspend the laws of nature, but followed them strictly for the purpose of saving him. It must be borne in mind that the Lord God is not like a fitful King who is only moved by his own impulses to favour a creature. Madhai was a sinner, and suddenly to make him a saint, because he had committed the atrocious crime of assaulting his best friend and a servant of the Lord,—a saint who had given up the world,—would be a little unjust to His other creatures, and would cast a reflection upon his wisdom and impartiality. He had provided punishment for the infringement of His laws, and Madhai had to suffer for his transgressions.

As poison or food equally affects the body, so there are baneful and meritorious acts which affect the soul. The body when it receives nourishment, assimilates it with the greatest readiness. When poison is permitted to enter into the system, the body tries to expel it. But if the process is continued, that is to say, if the poison continues to be introduced, the body at last needs the administration of an antidote which enables it to free itself from the effects of the deleterious substance. In the same manner, an evil act produces an impulse in the mind to overcome its evil effects, and this is called repentance. But if the process is continued, the soul, at last, becomes powerless to be able to free itself from the consequences of its evil acts. Madhai had arrived at this morally moribund condition, and at the moment the Lord was pleased to instil a drop of bhakti into his heart. This gave vitality to his spiritual, as an antidote does to the

poisoned physical system, and made it strong enough to be able to expel the poison which had well-nigh destroyed his soul.

Thus the laws of God are immutable, and every one must effect his own salvation. There is no royal road to the development of the spiritual nature of man, as there is no royal road to the development of his intellectual nature.

Madhai continued to give a description of the state of his mind to Nitai. He said: "I hear the shrieks of my fellow-beings I have injured, and see the agonizing faces of those I have subjected to torture. These spectres torment me day and night." And Madhai wept. After having restrained himself he continued: "It strikes me that there is one way by which I can relieve myself of the torments which have beset me. It is this. If I now could only get hold of the men I have injured and obtain forgiveness from them, I think I could bring some solace to my soul. But where are they and who are they?" And Madhai wept again. He continued: "I have thought of a plan. I shall post myself at the bathing ghats, where I shall meet all the men, women and children of the town. There let me ask forgiveness of all, whomsoever I come across. What do you say to this plan, my revered Guru?"

Nitai agreed to the proposal. Madhai then took his resolution. After resigning himself to God he came out of the house of Sreebas where he was spending his days and nights in privacy. He came out the most miserable man in the world, utterly unconscious of the crowd that his presence had collected round him. Men who hated him, men whom he had injured, wanted to have their revenge upon him. But they did not venture on any familiarity, for when a tiger has been killed, people do not dare approach the spot at once. They had seen the tiger of the city of Nadia in the prime of his power, they had not seen the process by which he had become a changed man and they dared not trust him. They followed

him, therefore, from a respectful distance. A man flung a stone at him and it struck him. The reveries of Madhai were broken, and he realized the situation at once.

At other times, if any one had ventured to assault him, that man would have been slain or otherwise punished. But now Madhai, though struck, did not feel his equanimity disturbed in the least. And he smiled a smile of satisfaction ; he was satisfied with himself, because the insult offered to him had not ruffled his temper. He was satisfied, because he thought that he was now receiving a portion of that punishment which was due to him. Indeed, if the man who had cast the stone could but have had a glimpse of the chastened face of Madhai, with the deep anguish that was imprinted there, he would never have flung it.

Madhai sat on the bank, while a crowd stood around him. He gazed at the crowd, and the crowd gazed at him. Madhai tried to suppress his tears, because he wanted to address those who were before him. He rose and with folded hands said : "Behold in me Madhai, the Rajah of Nadia. In my pride of power I trampled everything sacred under foot. Will you now confer an inestimable obligation on me by trampling me under foot?" He said this and could not say more, for he burst into tears.

The crowd was petrified with surprise. Their hatred of the man evaporated in a moment. On the other hand, they felt a profound sympathy for the man whom they had followed, almost with hooting.

Then comes a bather, and Madhai falls at his feet. He says : "Kind sir, I do not know whether I have ever injured you or not. But behold in me the greatest sinner in the world, yet the Lord has promised to accept me, on one condition. It is that you, His creatures, will forgive me. If you cannot, at least put your foot on my head."

The man takes time to understand the situation. At first he cannot in Madhai recognize the terrible City-kotwal of

Nadia. He then has to realize the purport of the address which seems so strange in his mouth. He understands the terms of the address, but yet he hesitates,—is Madhai acting a part, is he mocking him, is he really Madhai at all?

“You cannot recognize me?” continues Madhai, seeing the embarrassment of the man he has accosted. “Yes, it is a miracle which has brought Madhai here. The Lord wants the greatest sinner on earth to bear witness to His infinite mercy, and the choice has very naturally fallen upon me.”

The man yet hesitates to accept Madhai at his word. Men like him, who have never known what self-control is, who are fitful, self-willed and passionate, are accustomed to perform many mad freaks. Possibly he is sincere now, but how long can a man like him remain a penitent? But Madhai had then been saved; everything about him shewed that Madhai had obtained the grace of a man born again,—the livery of God was upon him! A servant of God has his distinctive features which mark him out from others. He is sweet, he emits sweet fragrance, he speaks music, his company is soothing, ennobling, and fascinating.

Yes, there is a God and a very good God too. Do you want proof? Well, look at His servants. The man of power, the man of intellect, the man of personal charms, are but pigmies before a man of God. When I am assailed by doubts, I seek the company of a servant of God, and his company dispels them.

Well, Madhai, in a short time, became a potent influence to spread the religion of bhakti. “The greatest sinner on earth” soon began to be regarded as a saint. He himself with a spade in hand prepared a bathing ghat, which is known as Madhai ghat. Madhai lives in his descendants, who are devotees of Sree Gauranga and are now proud of their ancestor, “the greatest sinner on earth,” who bore testimony to the infinite mercy and love of God.

CHAPTER XVII.

ONE GREATER THAN MADHAI.

YES, Jagai and Madhai were conquered, but one greater than they rose to oppose the Lord and maltreat his bhaktas.

The brothers clung to the lotus feet of Sree Gauranga with determination, as their descendants are doing now. The two brothers bore witness, not only to the divine character of the Lord but his mercy, nay, to his love for human beings. People flocked to the standard of the Lord in hundreds and thousands, not only from the city but from the most distant parts of the country. Here is a free translation of an ancient song, describing how the advent of the Lord had influenced the popular mind :

“The spotless moon of Nadia has risen to dispel all darkness.

And the whole universe is swimminig in happiness.

The sinner, the blind, the leper and the halt are flocking

in crowds to Him.”*

It was in this manner that the country was thrown into a state of spiritual revolution. Those who, by ill-luck, remained outside the spiritual current, did not like this exhibition of joy on the part of their neighbours, in which they had no share.

* The Lord cured some lepers by his touch, and raised the dead or restored to health the dying, on some occasions, but, as a rule, the healing of diseases was a function which he himself did not perform, but left to his followers. Yet, it is alleged, that those who came to him were cured. They sat in rows in the street leading to his house, expecting to see the Lord when he came out to bathe. They prostrated themselves before him when the Lord appeared, and raised shouts of Haribole and were cured by their faith.

As the numerical and spiritual strength of the bhaktas increased, the opposition to the Vaishnavas very naturally increased in proportion.

But there was another more solid reason why the Lord and his followers began to be regarded with bitter hatred. They commenced to make conversions in such large numbers, as to frighten the higher classes, the leaders of the society, who apprehended a social disruption, and their consequent fall.

It has been stated before that caste-people, other than Brahmins, flocked to the standard of the Lord almost in a body. Some of the intellectual and learned Brahmins also did so, but not the majority. The reason was that his teachings were quite antagonistic to their material interests. The Brahmins had enveloped all religious practices with mysteries, keeping the explanation to themselves. Other castes had no way of reaching the ear of God except through them. The Brahmins lived by the profession of priesthood, and the other castes maintained them. The intellectual and spiritual progress of the other castes was thereby retarded, and the Brahmins were thus able to reign supreme.

But the Lord taught the people that every one was the child of God and had equal claims upon Him ; and that those who served Him secured the greatest advantages, irrespective of creed, caste or social position. Such and similar other sentiments, which the religion of the Lord taught, laid an axe at the root of Bramhminical superiority.

As we said before, the Lord and his followers never preached. The Lord taught mankind mainly by example. He lived as a humble worshipper and from him his companions learnt how to worship God Almighty. Yet he taught his intimate bhaktas now and then, especially when He revealed himself as Sree Krishna. He did not, as a rule, speak much when he spoke at all ; he merely taught in simple words how they could improve their spiritual nature. Every day he was visited at his

house by vast crowds. They came to bow to him and have a look at him. Oftentimes this was enough to give them a spiritual re-birth. They asked him to advise them how to behave themselves. Thus they asked of the Lord : "How are we to attain salvation, my Lord?" Under such circumstances he would advise them to repeat the name of God day and night ; to repeat His name whenever they had an opportunity ;* and to sit together,—friends, members of the family, father and son, wife and husband, male and female,—and perform Kirtan. "If you only do this," he would say, "the Merciful Father will fulfil your desire." Thus his people were seen uttering the holy names constantly even when engaged in the performance of household duties and many began to do Kirtan in their own houses ; and in the evening hardly anything was heard in the great city of Nadia, but the sound of music, khole, cymbal and Haribole.

Here we must parenthetically remark that the Lord taught deeper things to his intimate bhaktas according to their respective capacities. The Vaishnavas hold that one rule will not apply to all equally ; each must worship according to his capacity. What is food for a man of higher capacity may be poison to one who is less favoured. A man ought to have only as much of material food as he can hold and digest, and this rule applies equally to spiritual food. A man can, however, develop his capacity for higher spiritual food by culture and discipline. Thus what is poison to a man in the beginning, may be wholesome to him when he has grown spiritually. Wells are dug for water, the deeper the well, the clearer and copious becomes the flow of water. The human body is like the earth, where the worshippers dig for the

* This teaching may seem to be antagonistic to the precepts of the Bible, where it is prohibited to take the name of God in vain. But here the names are to be repeated not in vain but with the highest object in view. Besides I am assured that the prohibition refers to swearing and cursing by the name of God.

divine nectar. The deeper a man can dig, the clearer and the more copious becomes the liquid he obtains.

The Lord taught the simplest as well as the subtlest of things to his bhaktas according to their several capacities. The heart was searched with the eyes of a competent seer, and the position of prem and bhakti therein ascertained. These two ethereal sentiments were then analyzed, and that, in as careful a manner as a chemist does the object of his research and experiment. Language fails to give one an idea, as to what minute lengths the analysis of prem and bhakti was carried by the followers of the Lord. Subtle as the subjects, prem and bhakti, were, the saints analyzed and treated them as material objects. The bhaktas obtained their inspiration from the Lord, and wrote hundreds of books on those subjects. The wonderful books written by the bhaktas of the Lord which contain the analysis of prem and bhakti, and the researches of these spiritual savants extending into the innermost regions of the human heart are yet extant, though unfortunately they are not generally read. These books will enable any man to see the capacity and constitution of his own heart, his own position as regards God, the different ways by which men can approach God, the pitfalls which beset him on his way to Godhood, &c. &c.

But to resume. The great city of learning was almost entirely converted into a holy city of spirituality and Kirtan. The leaders under the old regime found that they were fast losing influence. An ordinary man hitherto would have stood speechless and paralysed before a savant, but now the savant's presence was scarcely noticed by the bhaktas, whose hearts were entirely occupied by other holier thoughts, and with the Image of the Lord. So at last the conservative party resorted to physical force for the purpose of putting a stop to the spread of Vaishnavism. While Jagai and Madhai reigned, they found in them champions who were both willing and able to act against Nimai Pandit. But now that those champions had been appropriated by the Lord, his

opponents sought the help of the Mahomedan Governor or the Kazee of the city !

The feelings between the Hindus and the Mussalmans were then very bitter as one can readily understand from their respective positions. The Governor was not, therefore, the best party to be invited to take sides in a purely Hindu matter like this. The opponents of the Lord took a false step, and we are almost ashamed to mention it. But then, their vital interests were at stake, and they lost the power of discriminating between right and wrong. They approached the Governor, known as Chand Kazee, grandson of the then King of Gour, that is to say, of Bengal. This young man was therefore highly connected ; and he had absolute power, and thousands of Pathan soldiers to enforce his authority.

The opponents of the Lord told him that the young pandit Nimai was destroying Hinduism by his strange doctrines, and that the Governor, as representing the King, was bound to put a stop to it. "You are the Lord of the town and represent the sovereign," said they. "And it is your duty to afford protection to the Hindus."

The opponents of the Lord had nothing heretical to urge against the Lord, for he was only following the philosophy of the holy *Bhagabat* in his mode of worship, and the *Bhagabat* is admitted by the Hindus to be a book of authority. But, they urged, that according to the Hindus, God sleeps in the heart, and must be addressed silently. The followers of Nimai Pandit, however, dance and make a good deal of noise when worshipping Him. Such a procedure is likely to alienate God Almighty and lead Him to destroy the city. The opponents of the Lord thought that if the Kazee, who was regarded with absolute terror, could be only induced to shew his disapproval of the doings of the Vaishnavas, that community would give up their pretensions, from sheer fright.

Here was a strange experience for a Mussalman Governor. According to him the Hindus worshipped devils, and it was of no moment to him whether they agreed or not in their mode of puja. But here was an opportunity of exercising authority, and in a matter in which he and his predecessors had never been permitted to interfere. What man of the world would let slip such an opportunity? He further saw that many of the leading Hindus of the town were for the suppression of Nimai, and he readily promised to take the matter seriously in hand.

The Kazee at first sent his men to stop Kirtan. But the city was big and his men found it impossible to stop it. While Kirtan was being suppressed in one quarter, the Vaishnavas in other parts of the town continued it; and the quarters in which it had been suppressed resumed it as soon they were left alone. The suppression of Kirtan was thus found to be an arduous task by the Kazee's men. They reported accordingly, and the opponents of the Lord also prayed for more energetic measures.

Needless to say that these violent proceedings of the men of the Kazee threw the bhaktas in a state of consternation. They knew not what to do. To speak to the Lord, they did not like. They would await events and see whether the Lord would take note of their sufferings of his own accord. They thus bore every thing patiently. But the Kazee was not disposed to desist from further interference. His authority had been indirectly defied and his self-love had been hurt. So, one evening he invaded the town with "thousands" of his Pathan soldiers!

A good deal of oppression was practised by these soldiers upon the citizens who were found doing Kirtan. People were beaten indiscriminately, kholes broken,* and houses invaded and even looted. The Kazee marched triumphant from one part of

* One quarter of the city got the name of khole-bhanga or the place where the kholes were broken, from the above incident.

the town to the other, promising dire penalties to those who would again do Kirtan ! Be it said to the credit or discredit of the Kazee that he avoided the higher classes of bhaktas, and punished only those belonging to the lower orders.

The misery occasioned to the bhaktas by these proceedings can scarcely be described. They were in utter despair. They were men humble as grass, innocent as lambs ; and their only offence was that they sang hymns in their own houses with the members of their respective families and their friends. So there was no help for it, thought they, but to speak to the Lord on the subject of their grievance, and accordingly they approached him the following morning.

To him they detailed all their sorrows,—how they had suffered at the hands of the Kazee, how he had prohibited Kirtan by proclamation, and how he had threatened dire punishment to those who would venture to disobey the order.

The Lord was not, however, the least ruffled by this threatening attitude of the irresistible Kazee. He told them that in a matter like this, they should shew their faith in Sree Krishna by disregarding all earthly considerations. “Worship Sree Krishna with faith,” said he, “and He is bound to protect you.”

Thus encouraged they came back. The word flew from mouth to mouth that the Lord had ordered them not to desist, but to continue worshipping Krishna as usual. So they again defied the authority of the Kazee and commenced Kirtan.

When the Kazee heard this, he returned to the city accompanied by “thousands” of soldiers and again began his oppressions. Be it said here, that he did not treat the offending parties with as much severity as people expected of him. Indeed, the efforts that he made to stop Kirtan were very feeble, and it seemed that he had no heart in the business. If the bhaktas had patiently held out, they might have won in the long run. But the Afghans always carried with them a reputation for

cruelty, and their presence always created fear and even consternation. Besides, the social customs of the Hindus made it easy for the Mussulmans to intimidate them. If a Mussulman only entered the house of a Hindu, the latter lost his caste and became something of an out-caste. The followers of the Lord, moreover, had forsworn the use of lethal weapons on becoming the servants of Sree Krishna. They endured their sufferings with great patience for a time, but at length brute force succeeded in overcoming the spiritual strength of the bhaktas. In short, the Kirtan, day by day, grew weak, and finally ceased !

The bhaktas again appeared before the Lord. They wanted permission to leave the city, as they could not live without Kirtan, and the Kazee was too strong to make it expedient for them to ignore his prohibition in the matter. They begged permission from the Lord to leave, and they—burst into tears !

We have said that the face of the Lord has been likened to a full-moon, for it imparted joy to those who beheld it. Indeed, it seemed to have been sculptured out by a master artist of consummate skill. Besides, it gave evidence that the owner was an intelligent, guileless being of infinite love. Such was the face of the Lord, the most perfect that ever was seen on this earth. But when the bhaktas recounted their sorrows and burst into tears, all its tenderness of expression disappeared. He then looked terrible, so terrible that the bhaktas feared to look at him !

Said he : “Does the Kazee mean to stop the Kirtan of God ? Let him then first stop me ! Citizens ! I mean to-night to do Kirtan in every part of the town. Let us see how the Kazee will stop it. Do one thing ; come every one of you in the afternoon so provided that you can accompany me with a light. Go, proclaim My orders (here the Lord revealed Himself) to every part of this vast city. Sreepad Nityananda, do you also issue this proclamation of Mine as against that of the Kazee all over the city. To-day I shall annihilate the authority of the

Kazee. To-day I shall deluge Nadia with a shower of prem, and wash away every opposition to the Kirtan of God."

The citizens, feeling assured that it was God Almighty Who was issuing the command, departed from the presence of the Lord to execute His commands.

The terms of the Proclamation came to be known all over the vast city with the speed of lightning. At about four, people began to flock to the house of the Lord. His intimate companions filled the courtyard, and others, finding no place inside, assembled outside the house. People poured in from all quarters of the town. They had each of them a garland of flowers round his neck, and a lamp in his hand. "If the father brought a lamp so did his son." Others who intended to carry more than one lamp brought one or more servants with them. In this manner some "wealthy men brought a thousand men with them provided with lamps."*

It came to be rumoured among those who were indifferent as also among the enemies of the Lord, that he would in the evening perform Kirtan in all parts of the town. They naturally did not put much credence in the report. Nimai Pandit was accustomed to do things in secret, so that the general public were not permitted to see what his Kirtan was. Some people had, indeed, witnessed it at the time the two brothers were saved, but the number who did so was very small. Why should Nimai Pandit, they thought, throw away all his previous reserve and now appear in public?

Besides, they were almost sure that Nimai, who was at least an intelligent man, would never venture in this manner to defy the authority of the Kazee, supported by thousands of brutal soldiers. Was it not a ruse on the part of the Pandit, they took counsel of one another, to give some sort of consolation to

* Chaitanya Bhagabat.

his discredited followers for the beating they had received? "Take my word for it," said one, "there will be no Kirtan in the town at all, and Shachee's darling will excuse himself on some plea or other." If the traitors had any idea that the Lord would really besiege the city with a general Kirtan they would probably have run to the Kazeer with the information.

The followers of the Lord, however, had no such doubts in their minds. They all prepared themselves to perform his bidding and to undergo any sacrifice that might be required of them. They passed the day in holy thought and in the expectation of passing a holier and more delightful evening. They washed themselves, anointed their bodies with sandal, decorated their persons with garlands of flowers. The females, in like manner, put on their best dresses, as befitting the joyful and holy occasion. The joy of the bhaktas, men and women, exceeded all bounds. Would they not, on that day, see the Lord pass by their houses dancing? So they made preparations for a general illumination at night of their houses. Each worked for himself, and they vied with one another in their holy zeal. And as the Lord might pass by their doors, (none knew the route that he would take) every one made preparations to give him a warm welcome. Every householder, among his followers, arranged jars, filled with sacred water and covered with mangoe leaves, and planted plantain trees, at his door. They decorated the outer walls with green branches. They gathered cowries (small shells used as coins) and khai (paddy baked) and flowers to be showered into the street before him, if the Lord should pass by their doors.

Numerically the followers of the Lord formed the strongest party in the town, though he had only revealed Himself a few months. Next came those who were either indifferent or hostile. Those who were indifferent, seeing that their neighbours were making preparations for the purpose of celebrating the city

Kirtan, allowed themselves to be caught in the current of joy which had convulsed the town. They, therefore, imitated the followers of the Lord in making preparations for illuminating and decorating their houses. Eventually the opponents also had to submit. For, it oftentimes happened that, while the father was a deadly opponent of the Lord, the son was, on the contrary, a devoted adherent. In like manner, sometimes the husband was an opponent, while the wife was a devotee. The result was that almost every man in that vast city contributed his mite towards celebrating the city-Kirtan with becoming grandeur.

As stated before, the followers of the Lord, in their excess of zeal, had flocked to him before it was evening, each carrying one or more torches in his hands, and a garland of flower round his neck. The throng that gathered there was immense. Gradually, others who were not followers of the Lord joined the assemblage. Wherever there is a concourse of people the crowd draws others. In this manner almost the whole town was moved to swell the gathering which then filled the streets adjoining the house of the Lord and the strand. The number of men that gathered round the house of the Lord was so immense that, say the chroniclers, "any computation was out of the question." It seemed that every one in the town had come to join the procession. People were amazed to see that the city of Nadia had such a large population.

As the sun had not as yet set, the vast crowd whiled away the time in loud and joyous peals of "Haribole," repeated one after the other, in rapid succession.

The Lord was in his room. Gadadhar, Narahari and a few others were dressing him. The Lord sat there as a bride does before a looking-glass surrounded by dressing maids, submissive and patient. They would not let him go out till they had dressed and adorned him to their entire satisfaction. They began to decorate his face with "aloka" (white paint).

The Lord smiled and desired to be excused. But they would take no denial. So his black and shining hair was combed, and made into a "chura" (knot) like that of Sree Krishna. They gave him an exquisitely beautiful silk dhuti to wear, and a chadar with which to cover himself. Round the "chura" they arranged a wreath of sweet scented flowers. They made a large garland of bakul (a scented flower) for his neck which reached down to his feet. Thus dressed, and when he was declared to have eclipsed Cupid himself in every way, he was allowed to come out.

The Lord came out into the courtyard, and the crowd made way for him. They gazed at him with wonder, admiration and joy. The Lord in his new dress looked more beautiful than ever. A good many, in silent admiration, began to shed tears of joy, for as palatable things draw water from the tongue so a beautiful sight draws water from the eyes. Others in their excitement announced the presence of the Lord by a loud "Haribole." Hitherto the "Hariboles" had come from outside, now the exclamation came from within the courtyard, by which the people outside knew that the Lord had issued from his house, and there was indescribable tumult for a moment.

The Lord surveyed his immediate followers and smiled with the pleasure which the sight of their numbers and enthusiasm gave him. They had come neatly dressed and annointed with sandal. They had all decorated themselves with garlands of flowers and put on their musical anklets for the purpose of enhancing the effect of their dancing during the Kirtan. A good many also had come with Khole, cymbals, bugles, horns, flags, streamers, etc.,

The Lord uttered his *Hoonkar*.* Such hoonkars can be heard only from a short distance. But when the Lord uttered

* This hoonkar may be translated into a whoop. The war-whoop is uttered by the Captain, to encourage the soldiers, or by the soldiers themselves to

it, it was heard by, not only those inside, but many of those outside. By this hoonkar the Lord gave assurance to his followers that they had nothing to fear from anything or any person, for He was there with them.

As a matter of fact, this hoonkar inspired them with bhakti, new life and courage. The Lord uttered his hoonkar again and again. Every such effort of the Lord resulted in his followers being inspired with additional life and courage. They all became impatient to proceed, though the sun had not yet set.

The Lord then formed four Kirtan parties. The first was put under the charge of Advaita, the second under Sreebas, and the third under Haridas. The fourth and the last he kept under his own control. Nitai and Gadadhar were in this party. This was in the beginning, for subsequently hundreds of Kirtan parties were formed. In each party were two Kholes, and about a dozen singers. Advaita and his men began first, and singing awhile, proceeded, still singing the praise of the Lord God. The crowd opened a passage to them. As soon as Advaita and his men had left the place, Sreebas's turn came. After a while Sreebas left, and his place was occupied by Haridas. And when Haridas had left, the Lord himself prepared to start. The charming youth of twenty-four dressed in a silken dhuti and covered with flower garlands, issued from his house. For what? It was to fight the ferocious Afghan leader, provided with swords and guns and surrounded by thousands of brutal soldiers! It is thus that spiritual force and brute force have been incessantly fighting for mastery since the creation of the world.

encourage one another. In the excess of his bhakti the devotee frequently feels somewhat as the soldier does, because he considers himself an officer in the service of the great Father of all. And when under the influence of this feeling he is apt to give vent to a peculiar note of defiance to all evil, and to all danger, wor'dly or spiritual. The meaning of this hoonkar of a bhakta under the influence of the holy spirit is a feeling of security—a feeling that God's soldiers had nothing to fear.

The torches were lighted immediately. As evening approached, the whole town was illuminated. The concourse was so immense that the people of Nadia themselves were amazed to find that there were so many people in the town. Superstitious people even now believe that the dwellers of Heaven had taken human shapes to enjoy the inestimable privilege of dancing with God Almighty. "The Gods must have come down, or else whence all these men?" said they. "For surely it is not possible that the town could support so large a population." The torches in the hands of the processionists and the general illumination of the town made the night appear like broad daylight : and the spectacle was beautiful beyond description.

In the midst of all this vast assemblage the figure of the Lord was prominent ; "every body could see him," says the Chaitanya Bhagabat, "for he was the tallest and fairest of all."

They passed by the river-side, dancing and following the Lord spell-bound. The dancing figure of the Lord was like the full-moon, distributing gladness all around him. The Lord then no longer looked like a being of the world. The vast crowd saw that a holy light was being emitted from his body, while a bright crown-like halo enveloped his head. The Lord was dancing with uplifted arms and his gaze directed upwards, while the following song was being sung : "Let my heart cling to Thy feet, O my Krishna !"

Presently the Lord falls down in a swoon, and those who surround him are hushed into silence. Presently he rises, his gold-hued body besmeared with dust, but his copious tears of joy, which drench all those who surround him, wash him thoroughly. Now, he sits down with eyes closed like a man in communion with God, or as God Himself. Now, he gazes at those near him, and his look is so tender that a thrill of pleasure passes through their frame.

When the traitors came to know that Nimai Pandit had actually come out to celebrate the Kirtan, they counselled among themselves that the governor should be informed of this move on the part of "Shachee's darling." To make things sure, however, they came to reconnoitre and see everything for themselves. They felt that by this imprudent and reckless defiance of authority, "Shachee's darling" had placed himself at the mercy of the irresistible governor ; so they were in a happy state of mind.

"Let us first see what the real matter is," thought they, "and then there will be time enough to inform the Kazee about it." "And when the Kazee comes with his thousands of soldiers,"—and the contemplation gave them infinite pleasure,— "will not there be fun then? Will not 'Shachee's darling' then jump into the Ganges and swim across the river?"

What they saw, however, took away their breath and filled them with wonder and awe. They saw that the crowd was immense beyond calculation. They felt that their opponent, the Pandit, carried with him a physical force which was not inferior to that of even the governor himself. They saw that almost every one of the vast crowd was beside himself with joy and prepared to do anything, however reckless, for the sake of the Lord. Their wonder, however, knew no bounds when they saw the dancing figure of the Lord.

So, this is "Shachee's darling," the boastful scholar, thought they, with wonder and amazement. They had seen the Lord when he was a scholar, and very little of him after he had come from Gaya and revealed Himself. They had no notion whatever that the object of their contempt, Nimai, had suddenly become so inaccessibly high as to be beyond their reach. It was clear that if the Kazee was the nominal master of the town, the real master was the Pandit. But what startled them most was the divine figure of the Lord. They at once came

to the conclusion that the dancing Being before them, if he was a man at all, was certainly a higher being than the rest of the throng.

They stood awe-stricken, humble, penitent and frightened. "Lucky is Shachee to have given birth to such a being"—said one. "Lucky is Nadia, that Nimai is one of its citizens," said another. "Is this Nimai Pandit, or a god in disguise?" said yet another. And they did not know how to settle the question. They agreed that if he was not a god, he was at least an incarnation of bhakti, and, as such, the dearest servant of Sree Krishna ; and they soon came to feel that God Almighty would not suffer a holy man like the Pandit to be interfered with, much less punished. They were violently moved to see the bhakti of the Lord, which they declared was beyond the reach of earthly man. They were so violently moved as to fall prostrate before the procession.

The procession passed by the strand ; on one side was the river, on the other the dwelling-houses of citizens. Every house was illuminated, every door was decorated with emblems of welcome of every possible design. The stream of human beings is passing along the streets, and the ladies on the terraces, the only parties who on account of their sex are not taking an active part in the triumphal procession, seem to have eyes only for the Lord. At last comes the dancing figure of the Lord, before their expectant gaze, and they raise the joyful sound of "ulu" and throw shells, flowers and Khai before him. They, with tearful eyes, then salute the Lord with great humility and devotion.

As for the innumerable men who formed the procession, they gradually became intoxicated with joy, and under its influence, they behaved like men beside themselves. Strangers embraced one another, as if they were old and dear friends. Some sat down and besmearcd themselves with dust, as if it was the most

pleasant occupation in the world. Others sat and wept, and wept incessantly. Some took it into their heads to besmear themselves with dust, taken from the feet of any one they came across, and thus please themselves and Sree Krishna by their humility. Some danced with uplifted hands, totally forgetful of the presence of others. Some found themselves impelled by excessive bhakti to prostrate themselves before every one they found before them.

Others became stark mad. Some of them ascended trees and thence jumped to the ground, indifferent to the risk to their limbs. A few combined together and proceeded to arrest Yama himself. Now, Yama is the god who judges the merits and demerits of men after death, and hurls those to hell who were fallen and unrepentant. Their idea was that since the Lord had come to save all mankind, the occupation of the lesser divinity, Yama, was gone, and he had no longer any business to live and torment the unfortunate creatures of God.

Though most of them had forgotten it, a few yet remembered that they had a certain business before them. Was it not for the sake of the opponents of the Lord that they had been insulted and assaulted by the governor? And were they not going to punish the aggressive Kazee? Some of those who happened to remember this, broke off branches of trees and converted them into lethal weapons with which to assault him. But where was he? In the then state of their mind they fancied that he was before them, and they began, as they thought, to beat him, their blows, of course, falling upon the earth. Others, in the same fanciful manner, proceeded to bind the opponents of the Lord, hand and foot, and bring them before the Lord as prisoners.

The mass of the processionists, however, forgot the Kazee and their opponents. A celestial feeling of joy had taken possession of them and they felt that they were in Heaven, secure in

the lap of the Almighty Father, under His kind protection. They were then under the influence of universal love, not only love for every man but for every living thing. That feeling had driven away from their minds, all bitter feelings against the Kazee and all remembrance of his oppression.

The crowd was immense and many different Kirtan parties had been formed. Some of the songs that were sung on that occasion are on record. We have already noticed one. Here is the first stanza of another : "The son of Nanda (i. e, Sree Krishna) has revealed Himself in Nadia with his flute and garland of wild flowers." The other begins thus : "Let us exclaim Hari and Ram. The name of God has appeared in the house of every citizen of Nadia."

The effect of the Kirtan upon the processionists is thus graphically described in the Chaitanya Bhagabat : "Some danced, some rolled on the ground, forgetful of themselves. Some played on their mouths with their hands and sang different songs. Some jumped upon the shoulders of others, some wept while holding the feet of others, some contented themselves with weeping, and some with embracing whomsoever they came across."

One forgot his own personality, and fancied that he was Nimai Pandit ; and seeing that none acknowledged him, he addressed the company thus : "Where are you going? Are you in search of Pandit Nimai? Here I am Sree Krishna Himself, come to save all mankind, all—all—all," and then he danced, in imitation of the Lord.

Supernatural incidents occurred also. They saw celestial sights, angels dancing, beautiful paradisaal scenes which have no parallel on earth. Some sang beautifully who had never sung before, some spoke in tongues which they had never known. The Lord was dancing as he alone could dance, like an incarnation of ecstasy. Suddenly he took the road leading to the house of the governor !

Now, as stated before, almost every one had forgotten all about him. He, as a Mussalman, lived outside the town. The Lord in proceeding to that quarter could have no other object than that of visiting the governor, to whom as a follower of the Prophet, his Hari-Kirtan was an abomination. Moreover, to confront him with such a crowd, after what had already occurred, was tantamount to an attack upon his house with the almost certain consequence of a hand-to-hand encounter. When the Lord, however, proceeded towards the house of the Kazeer, every one remembered him as the cause of all the present arrangements and movements. Every one could then see that though the Lord was dancing in his celestial joy, he had not forgotten the governor, the main object of the mighty city-Kirtan.

Then the opponents of the Lord repented ! The figure of the Lord, dancing under the influence of his love for God, had softened their hearts towards him. The sight was irresistible ; indeed, it was impossible for a man of the world, however brutal, to resist the influence of that spectacle. The chroniclers of the Leela of the Lord record in deep sorrow, that non-believers opposed the Lord because they chose to stand aloof. If they had only come, say the chroniclers, and seen things for themselves, they would have surrendered to his lotus feet with joy. But they saw nothing, and, so they ridiculed the Lord and His bhaktas. Such was the maya (delusion) which seized them that they never made the slightest effort to discover how this young man of twenty-three had been able to convert many thousands of men, some of them savants of Indian celebrity, in the course of a few months. Had they done so they would have seen things calculated to lead them irresistibly to fall at the feet of the Lord. The bitterest opponents of the Lord had an opportunity, during this great city-Kirtan, of seeing him ; and the sight not only took away their hostility to him, but led some of them to surrender to him and become ardent bhaktas.

The opponents having forgotten their animosity towards the Lord, nay, having suddenly imbibed a feeling of deep regard for him, did not like the turn events had taken. They apprehended the shedding of blood, and they did not desire it. Would not an encounter between hundreds of thousands of unarmed Hindus and thousands of ferocious Pathan soldiers mean the massacre of the former? In the procession, moreover, were their neighbours, friends and, in many instances, dear relations. Then again, their bitter prejudice against the Lord having completely disappeared from their minds at the sight of his divine figure, they could not help being convinced that in him they beheld a man of extraordinary merit, and an unparalleled bhakta, opposition to whom therefore meant hostility to God Himself. They could see that their opponent, Nimai, was utterly under the influence of his religious feeling; and that it was this feeling and not worldly sense that was leading him to the house of the dreaded Kazeer. In fine they thought that this gifted and holy young man was, under the influence of bhakti, going to sure destruction, and that they were the cause of this threatened calamity! Remorse seized them, and their greatest desire now was to prevent it.

As a matter of fact, the action taken by the Lord was hazardous in the extreme. He, with a crowd of delirious followers, armed only with garlands, of flowers, Kholes, and cymbals, flags and trumpets was about to court a hand-to-hand fight with regiments of pitiless soldiers whose creed was that the destruction of the unbelievers would be their sure passport to heaven. The fidelity of his followers was surely tested. But none faltered, none forsook him, they clung to him, unarmed as they were, and risked being cut to pieces.

When the Lord took the road leading to the house of the Kazeer every one could see that he was going there, and they were thus reminded of the object of their present movement.

So they raised the shout of "To the Kazeec." Their bhakti had softened their hearts and made them susceptible ; so that they were easily led from one extreme of feeling to the other ; and now they became filled with furious resentment at the conduct of the governor. The cry of "mar Kazeec," that is to say "beat the Kazeec," was raised by thousands of men.

The governor knew nothing of this movement ; so he had made no preparations. Those who had led him to oppose the Kirtan never believed, till the last moment, that Nimai Pandit would actually venture to defy the Mussalman Governor of the city. And then, all the preparations had been made in a few hours, and the Lord in getting up this demonstration, had shewn that he possessed more than human power. Says the chroniclers : How was it that the whole of this vast city was illuminated at such short notice ? Who told the householders to illuminate their dwellings ? And if no direction was given what invisible force impelled them to make such an elaborate display ? And if any direction were given, why were they obeyed so universally ? How was it that every door was decorated ? How was it, that opponents—bitter opponents—were led to do likewise ? There was no previous arrangement at all. In the morning only a few bhaktas had come to complain of the governor, and the Lord said that he would that night lead a public Kirtan himself. He asked the bhaktas and Nityanada to issue a proclamation to that effect. That was all he had done. How was it that hundreds of thousands of men were led by this proclamation to flock to his standard with millions of torches ? And how was it that these men, unarmed and non-combattants, were led to risk their lives and every thing they held dear for the Lord ! Is it possible for a mere human being to collect a vast population at one spot at a moment's notice ? None tarried at home, no one excused himself. The Chaitanya Bhagabat triumphantly exclaims, that this city-Kirtan is

proof enough to shew that the Lord possessed more than human power, and that it was His will alone that had brought about the extraordinary success of the arrangements.

Well, when the procession neared the house of the governor (it was then about 9 o'clock at night) he heard the noise. He came out to see what the matter was. He saw that the whole town was illuminated. He could further see that some body was leading a very big procession. Curious to know what the matter was, and fancying that it was the marriage procession of a very big man, he directed his men to enquire and bring him information. These men went forth confidently, but did not return.

The procession continued its progress towards the house of the governor, and when it had come nearer, it struck him that it might be a Kirtan party, for he could distinctly hear sounds of Kholes, cymbals and clarions, mingled with that of faintly audible songs. The idea, that it might be a Kirtan party, caused him to fly into a rage. He spoke to his followers: "Do not the sounds indicate that this is the devil's Kirtan, and that the party belongs to Nimai Pandit? This is disobedience of authority indeed! If my conjecture be not at fault, I must this very night exterminate these new Vaishnavas. What impudence! It seems they are coming to me! Go forth well armed, arrest all those whom you can get hold of, and bring them here, even Nimai Pandit himself."

A large number of soldiers hastened to carry out the orders of the governor. He expected every moment the sounds to cease, but they did not. Nay, they continued to increase, naturally, as the procession neared his house. The governor had then no doubt whatever that it was a Kirtan party that was coming to interview him!

This assurance not only inflamed his rage, but also made him a little anxious. He could perceive that the procession was

made up of a vast concourse of people. How was it that instead of avoiding him they were coming to visit him? How was it that his soldiers had not been able to arrest the progress of the procession? He apprehended that perhaps his men had been overpowered. He hastily sent forward re-inforcements; he sent forward almost every one he had at his disposal to oppose the current, which he then felt to be vast. He expected the Kirtan to cease; he expected groans of the wounded and the arrested to take the place of the hymns of the processionists. But he was disappointed; the noise increased, nay, he could now hear them declare that they were thirsting for his blood. In short, he distinctly heard the cry of "mar Kaze." In a few moments he found himself and his house surrounded by hundreds of thousands of men!

The few soldiers that he had at first sent out found the processionists at a great distance from their own quarters. They went to make enquiries but found themselves swallowed up by the crowd. They, however, found something more, namely, that the crowd was advancing with the intention of punishing their master! Now a clean-shaven Hindu is easily distinguished from a Mussalman, who is almost always bearded, and the Kaze's men had therefore no way of disguising themselves, more especially as the blazing light of the torches had converted night into day. They were, however, not molested: indeed, their presence was scarcely perceived or noticed by the crowd.

When the armed soldiers came next, they too found themselves helplessly entangled. People joined the Kirtan from all sides, the soldiers never expected resistance or any hostile force to cross them. They, therefore, had come negligently attired and not in battle array, with the result that they were soon separated from one another, and thereby incapacitated from acting in concert. They too found themselves swallowed up by the crowd.

The re-inforcements found the infuriated Hindus too many for them, and prepared for any turn of events ; so they fled, or rather, they tried to do so but there was no place in which they could conceal themselves. They were engulfed by the crowd. They were thus seen one here, another there, says the Chaitanya Bhagabat, in the crowd, in a state of the utmost trepidation. But whether they were not recognized as the men of the Kazee, for they had thrown away their arms, or the crowd could do nothing without the order of the Lord, no one meddled with them in any way.

When the Kazee found his house surrounded on all sides and heard the cries of "mar," "mar," he, not knowing what to do, entered the inner apartments to protect the ladies, at the cost of his own life, if necessary. The crowd entered his gates and the more violent amongst them dragged down some of his out-houses and demolished everything that they could get hold of. "A few," says the Chaitanya Bhagabat, "plucked flowers from the garden, stuck them in their ears, and began to dance."

All these un-vaishnava-like proceedings were stopped as soon as the Lord appeared on the scene. The thoughtless crowds who formed the advance-guard, had done all the mischief that was possible for them to do under the influence of their excitement, and under the belief that such proceedings would be pleasing to their Master : but when the Lord came up and saw their doings, he reproved them for their conduct and every one was hushed into silence. The word flew from mouth to mouth that the Lord had commanded silence and forbearance and all these thousands of people submitted in an instant cheerfully, without a murmur, forgetting all the injuries that they had sustained at the hands of the Kazee.

The Lord inquired where the Kazee was and it was soon ascertained that he had fled into the inner apartments to protect

himself and his family. He then deputed some of the leading men of the town and well-known to the Kazeer, to convey to him a message to the following effect that, he, the Kazeer, should come out at once, and that he had nothing to fear.

This friendly message at once assured the Kazeer and he felt that he had actually nothing to fear. He could rely on the word of the men who had come to summon him. He saw, besides, that the people had ceased to shew acts of hostility. He could also feel that, if the Lord had any hostile intentions there was nothing to prevent him from attacking him where he had concealed himself, almost alone and unattended. So he came out, yet not altogether without suspicions of the intentions of his victors, though he did not show it. He came and stood before the Lord with bent head, as an inferior does before a superior.

The Lord, who had seated himself for a moment, rose on his arrival, and received him with the honour due to his position. The Lord then himself sat, and induced the Kazeer to sit before him. Shachee's father Nilambar and the Kazeer had been friends; and they had formed an artificial relationship, as is the custom here in India, between themselves. Indeed, the Kazeer called Nilambar his uncle or *chacha*. This entitled the Lord to call him, the Kazeer, *mamu* or maternal uncle. So the Lord addressed the Kazeer thus: "How is it, *mamu* (uncle), that on my coming to your house, you, instead of giving me a welcome, tried to hide yourself?"

The Kazeer thereupon at once saw that he had no reason to fear. Assured in this respect he replied in the same familiar manner: "You see, nephew, I had given you offence; and when you arrived, I saw that your people were bent upon revenge. So what could I do but endeavour to avoid their presence? Now, as it seems you have forgiven me, I have come out without hesitation to give you welcome."

To which the Lord replied : "I have to ask you one question ; kindly reply frankly. Why did you stop my Kirtan which is only a way of worshipping the deity ? You may not like it, but why should you not permit others to worship the Lord in the way they think best, especially when there is nothing objectionable or immoral in it ?"

Kazee.—I fully agree with you. Then let me tell you the whole history. But I feel a difficulty in addressing you. To call you nephew I venture not, for it seems that you can scarcely be a creature of this world, and must have come from on high.

Let us remark here parenthetically that the Kazee had never seen the Lord in his glory. He had heard of him and also that he was regarded as not only a prophet, but something more, even as the Incarnation of God Almighty Himself. Of course, being a Mahomadan he could have had no faith in the claim of divinity put forward on behalf of Nimai Pandit, and he had therefore felt no scruple in oppressing the followers of the Lord. It, however, came to his notice that some miracles had been worked by the Lord. A few Mussalmans had been converted by him, though there was nothing very strange in that. Some Mussalmans, however, presented a curious psychological phenomenon. They had gone to some followers of the Lord as enemies, and had come back bewitched, inasmuch as they found that they could not help uttering the name of Krishna. When brought before the Kazee they said that they could not help it and that their tongues had gone beyond their control.*

* The phenomenon of people repeating the name of Krishna or Hari, in spite of themselves, simply because they had seen the Lord or come in contact with him, was a very common sight with his contemporaries. Indeed, so familiar they were with the spectacle that they expressed no surprise when recording them. The Kazee, a superstitious man, was very much impressed by the spectacle and subsequently he came to regard the Lord with dread as one who had the power of doing him mischief.

These men, in every instance, eventually became followers of the Lord. The fact is that with those, as with many others, conversion commenced with the body or some member of the body, and subsequently took possession of the heart.

As a result of this, the Kazee had come to regard Nimai Pandit with a certain degree of awe, and it was due to this that the bhaktas had been latterly treated by him with some consideration. He had come to feel that there was something in Nimai which deserved respect and that his most prudent course would be to leave him alone, as far as was consistent with his own dignity, and the maintenance of discipline and contentment among his numerous followers.

The Kazee was just then moved by another consideration. He was a worshipper of brute force. He found the Pandit, whom he had formerly regarded simply as a poor savant incapable of offering any resistance, to be a man of authority, a man of greater authority than himself, nay, a man who had hundreds of thousands at his call prepared to sacrifice themselves at his bidding. There are minds which are subdued more by brute force than appeals to sentiment, and the Kazee very naturally was one of those. He confessed himself defeated, and was, therefore, inspired with profound respect for the Pandit.* Indeed, there was no longer any doubt in the mind

* What the Lord us'ally did was, at first, to subjugate a powerful man on his own ground before planting the seed of bhakti in his heart. For, as said before, to attain to bhakti one must first be in a negative state of mind and purged of all vanity and arrogance. Otherwise the seed will not germinate. Thus he first humbled the spirit of Keshava, the savant conqueror, before he blessed him. It was in this manner Jagai and Madhai were first humiliated. The Kazee prided himself on his brute force : he was shown that even in that the Lord was his superior. The great Sarvabhauma, the Naya savant, was first defeated in learning before he was accepted, and the great savant and sannyasi Prakasananda, then the greatest Vedantist living,

of the Kazeer that the Pandit was really a Prophet of great powers.

While speaking he had raised his head to look full into the face of the Lord, and the sight altogether bewildered him. He was fascinated in a moment ; he felt that he was being overpowered and that the Being before him was irrevocably taking possession of his heart, and that in spite of himself.

The Kazeer continued.—“I cannot venture to address you as my nephew : let me, therefore, call you Gaur-Hari,* the name by which you are called by your people. Well, Gaur-Hari, it is not all my fault that I objected to the Kirtan. The leading Hindus of the town came to me to complain against you and your method of worship, and my followers threatened me with the displeasure of the king of Gaur, if I allowed you to go on drawing such vast crowds of people towards you. They actually made a conspiracy to report me to His Majesty. And it was then that I was led to take action. Of course, I began very energetically, but I could see that your Kirtan had the sanction of God Almighty and therefore subsequently I desisted.” He now described how the name of Krishna had stuck to the tongues of some of his followers ; and eventually admitted that he had no longer any doubt in his mind about the divine character of the Kirtan.

The Kazeer stopped, for he found it difficult to proceed. While he was speaking, there was a commotion going on in his heart which made him forgetful, incoherent, and restless. He could, however, no longer keep his counsel to himself ; so he

was defeated in the V. das, before he was blessed. The explanation is, as said above, that so long there is vanity in the heart the seed of bhakti will not germinate there.

* The Lord was called Gaur-Hari because his colour was “gaur” or fair. Now Hari is a name of Krishna who is of dark complexion. But the Lord was fair or “Gaur,” so they called him “Gour-Hari” or the “Fair Krishna.”

betrayed what was passing in his mind. Said he abruptly : "There is only one God and the Hindus call him Narayana. People say that you are He. Is it so? Don't deceive me."

The Lord smiled the sweetest of smiles, and those who saw it felt a thrill of pleasure pass through their frames. To the question of the Kazee he replied nothing, but he caught one of his fingers, and said : "You have uttered the holy names of Hari, Krishna, and Narayana, to your sins have been forgiven."

The effect of this pronouncement was instantaneous. The Kazee was violently affected, and tears gushed from his eyes in such torrents as to wet his beard. "Yes, you are the Lord," said he, and he fell at the feet of the Lord. "Forgive me and accept me. I am a great sinner and I rely upon your mercy alone for my salvation."

The Lord restrained him. He said : "The holy names of God have saved you. Now, I have a request to make to you, cease meddling with the Krishna Kirtan." The request, however, was uttered now in a tone of command.

The Kazee replied with warmth : "Stop Kirtan again? No, I shall never do so. But I will do this : I will leave a legacy to my heirs for the protection of Kirtan. My curse be upon their heads if they ever meddle with it."

No sooner had the Kazee said this than the Lord rose and gave a sign for the Kirtan to commence. The Kazee wished to follow the retreating procession, but the Lord implored him to desist.

From thence the Lord went to the house of Sreedhar and there drank a glass of water which he found in an iron pot. This condescension on his part filled Sreedhar with so much gratitude that he swooned away !

In the morning the town presented a novel appearance. The vast crowd had trampled every thing under foot, so that the streets now seemed as if they had been swept and made clean

by thousands of sweepers. The streets were found strewn with shells, flowers and Khai which had all been thrown before the dancing Lord.

Thus the enemies of the Lord were conquered. His bitterest enemies came to acknowledge him as the greatest bhakta that ever appeared on the face of the earth, others accepted him as the Lord Himself without reserve.

The Kazee's grave exists at Nadia. It is held in great veneration by the Vaishnavas. Whoever goes in pilgrimage to Nadia takes care to visit the grave and salute it.

In the case of the Kazee, brutal ferocity succumbed to spiritual beauty, the flower garland vanquished the sword! And in what a miraculous manner was he brought under subjugation! The Lord went to him in force as his antagonist to his house, humiliated him before the world, and yet completely won his heart! What but divine power could achieve such a tremendous result?

CHAPTER XVIII.

SREEBAS'S ANGEENA (COURTYARD).

It was at Sreebas's that the Lord first revealed himself. It was there that the first Kirtan party was formed. It was there that the Kirtan was usually held and it was there that the Lord spent most of his time when away from his own house. It was at Sreebas's house that Chaitanya Bhagabat, the famous book on the Leela of the Lord, was written by Sreebas's grandson, Brindaban Das. In this chapter I purpose to give my readers an idea of the absolute faith in the Lord, with which His devotees were inspired.

It is evening. The bhaktas are coming one by one to join the Kirtan at Sreebas's. They are all in a hurry, for they know that the door will be closed as soon as the lamps are lighted, and that none will be admitted when the doors have been shut. The bhaktas come, the entrance door is firmly barred, and Gangadas stands there on guard.

The ladies sit in the verandah by themselves, while the members of the Kirtan-party sing and dance in the courtyard in praise of the Lord.* On that evening the verandah was,

* The advent of the Lord created a revolution in the land, social, moral, intellectual and spiritual. Under the influence of the religion of Sree Gouranga Hindu women acquired a status which they did not enjoy before or had lost at the advent of the Mussalmans. Some of these Hindu women, under the influence of this revolution, became Gossains or entitled to initiate others, a position which they never enjoyed. Indeed, female education which had been almost put a stop to, began to be encouraged by

however, empty, for the ladies of the neighbourhood, who entered Sreebas's house by the back-door and came to it through the inner apartment, had come to know of a certain fact which led them to keep away from the Kirtan. The bhaktas were dancing in great joy, when a female servant silently entered into their midst and made a sign to Sreebas to follow her. Sreebas thereupon left the Kirtan and followed the female servant to his inner apartment.

Sreebas's only son was ill. The disease, which is supposed to have been cholera, had suddenly taken a serious turn. But the Lord and the bhaktas had come and Sreebas must join them. Sreebas therefore left his boy to the care of his attendants while he joined the Kirtan party. Of course, he had come to suspect that the disease, which was gaining upon his son, was serious. But he was then, like the other bhaktas, in a peculiar state of mind. They had acquired the conviction that a loving God was always taking care of them. Nay, they had come to believe as strongly as they did in their own existence, that the same God was then with them in the person of Sree Gauranga. They had, therefore, voted many things to be illusionary which ordinary people considered most real and important. Secure of the

the Vaishnavas, the followers of the Lord. Bengali literature also got its first impetus from this religious revival. Besides, the caste-rules were relaxed under its influence. All the castes which had been kept under absolute control by the Brahmins obtained their freedom by this religion of prem and bhakti. When Subuddhi Roy, the ex king of Gaur, had been deposed from his throne by the Mussalmans and made to drink water polluted by the touch of a Mussalman, the Pandits provided for him a fearful penance. It was laid down that to wipe out his sin, he should die by swallowing clarified butter scalding hot! Subuddhi, unwilling to die in this manner, saw the Lord Gauranga and sought his advice. The Lord advised him to take the protection of the lotus feet of Hari. The practice of Sati was likewise discouraged by the Vaishnavas.

companionship of the Lord of the Universe for ever and ever in Goloke, they felt that there was scarcely any thing in this world which could give them pain or anxiety. Sreebas felt that his son was getting worse, but what could he do ?

He had put him under medical treatment, and when the Lord and the Kirtan-party came, he joined them leaving his son in charge of his mother, aunts and uncles, and in the bosom of the Lord God Himself.

The ladies of the neighbourhood, who had come to see the Kirtan, finding the inmates of the house so seriously embarrassed returned home, without joining the Kirtan party. The Kirtan had commenced, and the bhaktas were dancing in a state of ecstasy when Sreebas was called in. He hastened and saw that the soul of his boy was about to quit the body !

Sreebas was greeted with a suppressed outburst of agony by his wife and others. He saw the situation at once ; he saw that his only son was dying in his house, while the Lord was in another apartment dancing. He formed his resolution at once, and addressed the members of his family, especially his wife. He said : "Why do you weep ? Why do you weep for my son being about to pay the debt which every one of us must pay ? Let us congratulate ourselves on his good fortune. Where is there a mortal so fortunate as he ? That Being, whose name saves the worst of sinners, is dancing in my house just at the moment that my boy's spirit is quitting the flesh. The greatest of saints might envy his good luck. Don't be fools, therefore, crying when you ought to rejoice."

Sreebas stopped, for his feelings were too strained to allow him to proceed further. He began after a while : "Yet I see some of you are women, and human creatures are weak. At a moment like this, it is but natural that you should shed some tears over the departing dear one. But wait a few

moments, please. If you go on weeping, the matter will out, and eventually disturb the ecstatic dance of the Lord. The Kirtan will be soon over, and then you will have ample opportunities of giving vent to your feelings. But if you now make a noise over it, and my Lord is disturbed in his dance, I tell you, I shall throw myself into the Ganges and put an end to my life."

The ladies and his brothers submitted, and they all sat silent around the body, which by this time was lifeless, while Sreebas hastened out. There he joined the Kirtan party, and, as if nothing had happened, with lifted arms, began to dance with the others, crying "Haribole."

The matter, however, could not be kept a secret, for any length of time. It came to the notice of one of the Kirtan party. As soon as he heard of it, the current of his joy received a check, and he stood still, to discover what Sreebas was doing. There he saw Sreebas before him dancing with uplifted hands ! But has Sreebas heard the news ? He makes enquiries secretly and comes to know that Sreebas has heard of it, and that he has enjoined on his family to promise that the matter should be kept a secret, lest the information should taint the pure flow of ecstasy which the Lord was then enjoying. With this information in his possession, he again gazes at Sreebas to read if possible his heart. And what does he see ? He fails to find any trace of sorrow in his face ! It seems that Sreebas is enjoying the usual ecstasy like the others, and that his bereavement has not touched him in the least.

Another heard the news and he too stopped to see how the blow had affected Sreebas. They all gazed at the Lord, and saw that He was dancing with his accustomed vigour, his golden form dispensing glory and gladness all around him. They gazed at the Lord and they gazed at Sreebas, They were overpowered by divers feelings : Sreebas then looked less like a

man than a God. "And was it meet," thought some, "that the Lord should afflict such a bhakta as Sreebas, while dancing with him in his house?" And they thought again, "Why, what is the harm? Sreebas has been afflicted, it is quite true; but as a matter of fact, he does not feel his affliction. Lo! is he not dancing? Why then should we say that the bereavement of Sreebas was a punishment at all?"

The bhaktas, however, stopped one by one, and the sound of the Kirtan ceased. When all had become still, the Lord resumed his normal state, seeming as if he had just awakened from a dream, while he gazed appealingly at his bhaktas. He, however, got no response. He then gave vent to his feelings in these words, — "How is it that I do not feel any joy to-day? How is it that I feel so ill at ease?" The bhaktas gave no reply. He again asked: "How is it that my heart is weeping? Can it be possible that any danger has overtaken you?" And he looked at Sreebas for an explanation.

Sreebas said, "You, my Lord, the life of my life, are here, transforming to gold the dust of my court-yard by the touch of your lotus feet. Any danger to me is simply impossible."

Advaita, however, volunteered the information. He said, "Alas! it is too true, my Lord. A great misfortune has overtaken the Pandit. His son is dead."

Gauranga — "His son dead? When?" Advaita replied: "He died at about 9 in the evening, that is, some seven or eight hours ago."

The Lord then looked at Sreebas and subjected his face to a moment's rigid inspection. The examination was satisfactory. He said, "Sreebas! Thou hast to-day won over Sree Krishna; it is such devotion alone which can purchase Sree Krishna." And then he burst into tears. He said, — his voice broken by emotion, — "It breaks my heart to think of parting company with such noble souls and devoted bhaktas."

It was then Sreebas wept, not because of his bereavement, but from a quite different cause. Said he : "My Lord, I could suffer ten thousand such bereavements rather than see tears in your eyes. It was, lest the incident should give any pain to you, that I kept it secret. Be consoled, my Lord, the matter does not affect me. Why should it? Are you not before me? Is not my son the luckiest of beings, having left his body while in the same house with you? I feel as assured of your kindly feeling towards me, because of this incident of my son dying while you were dancing in my courtyard, as I can hardly express the extent of my overpowering joy."

Said the Lord : "I agree with you. A servant of Sree Krishna has no sorrow, he cannot possibly have any sorrow. Besides, let me remind you of one thing. Neither you nor I have come here to enjoy. It is misery all around us. We live to remove the misery of others as far as that is possible. Surely we have no time to think of our own. Sreebas, you have set an example by which men will profit in future ages. You have been overtaken by the greatest of misfortunes, the death of an only son. The only effect that it has upon you is that it has brought you nearer to Sree Krishna and made you a happier man than before. Does not this prove that a servant of Sree Krishna has no misery? Besides your example will prove to mankind what a servant of the Lord is capable of doing. Alas! I must, however, speak some words of consolation to the mother of the child." So saying, the Lord desired that the dead child should be brought before him.

The body was brought from the inner apartments to the courtyard where the Kirtan was being held. The ladies and other relatives of the child followed the dead body, weeping in a subdued tone. "Put him here," said the Lord, "and let me look at him." And the body of the dead child was placed before the Lord, while others surrounded it.

The Lord then addressed the dead child, and commanded him to speak. No sooner had he done so than the soul of the boy, which had quitted the body, again entered it. The boy then spoke and said: "I am quitting this body for a better existence." And the boy addressing the Lord said: "May my soul cling to Thy lotus feet." Saying this, the soul again quitted the body.

Every one was profoundly surprised at what they witnessed. The father and mother of the boy wept for joy; they had no longer any pangs for their bereavement. People are afraid of death, and people mourn over their dear departed ones, because they are not sure of an after-existence and a re-union. To those, for whom death is a new life and not annihilation, a re-union and not an eternal separation, it has no terrors.

The Lord then addressed the mother and the father of the boy, that is to say, Malinee and Sreebas. He said: "Rest assured that I and Sreepad Nityananda will take the place of your departed son." Then Sreebas, his brothers and all the other members of the family began to express their obligations to the Lord. They said: "We are Thine for ever and ever, in sorrow and in happiness."

The dead body of the child was then removed for the purpose of cremation. Thus ended this Leela of the Lord, which had one great saddening effect upon the minds of the bhaktas. What did the Lord mean when he said that it broke his heart to part with such company, meaning his bhaktas? Has he then any intention of leaving them, thought they? "If he leaves us we shall throw ourselves into the Ganges," they all resolved in their minds.

We cannot afford to increase the bulk of the book, so we have to stop here, though we have only begun our work. If permitted, it shall be my humble effort to continue and let my fellow-beings know the rest of the sweet Leela of the Lord.

The Lord had so long confined himself to the domain of bhakti which he taught by precept and example to mankind.

The prem he taught afterwards. No one will thoroughly understand what bhakti is, who has not gone through the prem-Leela of the Lord. I have tried to explain bhakti by calling it "loyalty to God," and prem by "love." The Christian prayer is a good specimen of communion with God by bhakti. The better and higher method, communion with God by prem, is no doubt noticed in the Bible. But Sree Gauranga developed it in a manner it was never done before.

A few weeks or so after the conversion of the Kazei, the Lord entered the domain of prem and began to shew, by practice, how God should be loved. He taught little by precept, but most by example. The love he displayed for God is unattainable by man, and it shewed that he was either God Himself or Radha. His bhaktas made him their model and thus learnt how to love God. A few months after, he renounced society ; and the day the Lord became a Sannyasee, Bengal wept, and hundreds of thousands were moved to surrender themselves at his feet, unconditionally and for ever and ever. As a Sannyasee he is known as Sree Krishna Chaitanya. May God bless all mankind, and may man remember the beloved Partner of his soul.

REFERENCES.

IN this volume I give only an extremely short account of some of the books and authorities referred to in the compilation of this work. As the incidents described in the book happened only four hundred years ago, at a time of the greatest literary activity in Bengal, the evidence that can be brought forward to prove them is simply overwhelming.

ANANTA SANHITA.—This book is supposed to have been written by Nityananda himself. It has frequently been quoted by the earliest of Vaishnava authors. Written in Sanskrit verse.

CHAITANYA CHARIT OR THE NOTES OF MURARI.—The author of this Sanskrit poem, Murari Gupta, was a near neighbour, constant companion and disciple of Lord Sree Gauranga. He was older than the Lord by about fifteen years. He put down in this book what he saw with his own eyes from the very birth of the Lord. This book was begun at Nilachal (Puri) when the Lord was only twenty-eight years of age.

ADVAITA MANGAL.—Written in Bengali by Nagar, a constant companion of the Lord. The author testifies to what he saw personally of the Leelas of the Lord.

GAURANGA UDAL.—By Pandit Mukunda, a follower and constant companion of the Lord.

CHAITANYA CHARIT KAVYA.—Written in Sanskrit verse by Kavi Karnapur, a contemporary of the Lord who was specially blessed by Him.

CHAITANYA CHANDRODAYA.—A Sanskrit drama by the same author.

JAGADISH CHARIT.—By a disciple of Jagadish. Jagadish was a near neighbour of the Lord.

CHAITANYA BHAGABAT.—Written in Bengali verse by Brindaban Das, a disciple of Nityananda, the grandson of Sreebas's brother, and the son of Narayani. This poem was written under the auspices of Nityananda, Sreebas and Narayani, the mother of the author, all constant companions of the Lord.

CHAITANYA MANGAL.—By Lochan Das, written under the auspices of Narahari, a dear and intimate companion of the Lord.

THE SLOKAS OF SARBABHAUMA.—By the great savant Basudva Sarbabhauma.

CHAITANYA CHARITAMRITA.—Written by Pandit Krishnadas Kabiraj, under the auspices of Goswami Raghunath, one of the most intimate of the Lord's followers.

NOTES OF RAGHUNATH.—By Das Raghunath Goswami alluded to above.

NOTES OF GOSWAMI SARUP.—Decidedly the most intimate of the Lord's followers.

NOTES OF RUP GOSWAMI.

NOTES OF SANATAN GOSWAMI.

NOTES OF THAKUR NARAHARI.—Alluded to above.

SONGS OF BASUDEVA GHOSE and other constant companions of the Lord, composed generally on the spot to describe the Leelas of the Lord.

BANGSI SHEEKHA.—By Bansi Badan, a companion of the Lord.

CHAITANYA CHANDAMRITA.—By the great savant and Sannyasee Probodhananda Sarasvati, who was converted by the Lord at Benares.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS.

Bhakti.—I do not know if this word has an English equivalent. Bhakti is not reverence, it is more than that. It is not faith, for faith is altogether a distinct thing. The nearest equivalent of bhakti seems to me "loyalty." Men who have a feeling of loyalty for their sovereign, have similar feelings for their masters as men having bhakti for God Almighty.

Guru.—Master ; teacher ; one who initiates.

Sannyasee.—One who has absolutely forsaken the world.

Avisār.—It is the progress of Radha to Sree Krishna from her home to Him in the secret recesses of Brindaban.

Harinam.—Nam is name. Harinam is the name of Hari which may be simply Hari, or Krishna, or Govinda or any one of the thousand names which the bhaktas have given to God.

Haribole—Literally "say Hari," uttered to express a strong feeling, such as joy or to express approbation.

Mantra.—Charm consisting of some mystical words.

Mān.—When in a feeling of anger the heroine refuses to have anything to do with her lover she is under the influence of *Mān*. Of course, the Hero is God as Krishna and the Heroine Radha.

Pulak.—The excess of feeling of a man is oftentimes expressed in the hairs standing on end.

Māyā.—Delusion or illusion.

Arati.—To worship God by light, it is a form of welcome or parting ceremony.

Pujā —Worship.

Brindaban.—The place where Sree Krishna flourished ; a city in the N.-W. Provinces.

Leelā.—The works God perform on earth assuming a form.

Prem.—Love. The feeling which a wife has for her husband is not love properly so called ; for her feeling is based upon interest and proceeds from a sense of ownness. True love must be disinterested, which is more akin to the feeling of a woman who feels for her lover for whom she is prepared to sacrifice all she holds dear, reputation, children, etc. It was thus Krishna was the lover and not the husband of Radha.

Purbarāg.—The hankering which one feels for God before attaining to Him.

Bhakta.—One having bhakti. In this book those following Lord Gauranga are generally meant.

Avatār.—An incarnation of God, or a Being, whom God Almighty sends to earth to perform a mighty action.

Tulsee —A sacred plant, with which Sree Krishna is worshipped, under its seal oaths are taken

